

V. IMPLEMENTATION

A. A First Step in Wildlife Conservation Planning

Development of the CWCS is an important step in setting the future direction for fish and wildlife conservation in Washington. This strategic document establishes a good biological foundation and planning framework. Further operational planning and program prioritization, at both the statewide and ecoregional scales, will need to be done to address the species and habitat priorities in the CWCS and to fully implement the strategy over time.

Although WDFW is driven by planning at many different levels, from multi-agency salmon recovery plans to individual Wildlife Area plans, creation of the State Wildlife Grants program and the CWCS requirement provided an opportunity for WDFW to undertake an agency-wide effort to reassess wildlife conservation priorities and set a new direction for the future. Specifically, the CWCS process provided the impetus for:

- a thorough reevaluation of priorities for species and habitat conservation
- a transition from statewide to ecoregional conservation
- acceleration of the evolution from species management (fine filter) to a more ecosystems-based management approach (coarse filter)
- expanding the emphasis on biodiversity conservation, at the statewide and ecoregional scales

In times of diminishing habitat resources and declining revenues for conservation it has been important for WDFW to initiate a new round of strategic planning and begin to establish new ground rules for how we prioritize species, habitats and conservation actions—and where we direct future funding and human resources to address these priorities.

B. Narrowing the Scope of Implementation

Development of the Washington CWCS has proceeded on a parallel track with completion of ecoregional assessments (EA) for nine ecoregions within Washington (see Chapter VI, Washington's Ecoregional Conservation Strategy) during 2003, through 2005. This was a huge undertaking for WDFW. Whereas this EA process has been completed in many areas of the country, we worked as partners with The Nature Conservancy to create the EAs in tandem with the CWCS process. The CWCS was completed in the fall of 2005; the EAs are expected to be finished in 2006.

By reviewing and synthesizing hundreds of conservation planning efforts, defining and listing priority wildlife species and associated habitats, and by articulating alternative, ecoregional conservation actions, the CWCS has greatly refined the scope of Washington's implementation strategy. An initial list of thousands of species classified as wildlife in Washington was systematically narrowed to about 700, then to about 200 Species of Greatest Conservation Need and their associated habitats.



The EAs, when completed, will establish conservation targets and map biodiversity at the ecoregional level. This effort will build on the CWCS by further targeting the range of funded actions to those areas on the landscape that show the most promise for long-range, cost-effective conservation.

When taken together, these two major statewide efforts, the CWCS and the EAs, will considerably refine the scope and breadth of Washington's current statewide wildlife conservation strategy. They provide a good starting point for setting long-term and shorter-range conservation goals and objectives; identifying conservation opportunities at the statewide, regional, and local levels; and designing or redefining projects to achieve these goals and objectives. The nearly concurrent completion of the CWCS and the ecoregional assessments will position WDFW and its conservation partners to embark on a well planned and more directed approach to future wildlife conservation.

C. Beginning the Implementation Process

While many actions have already been taken, using previous State Wildlife Grants (SWG) and other funding sources, further implementation of the Washington CWCS will begin in 2006, after it has been approved by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and after WDFW knows how much funding is available from State Wildlife Grants (SWG), as well as other sources, to begin or resume addressing the identified conservation needs of wildlife Species of Greatest Conservation Need and associated habitats that are outlined in the CWCS.

A number of important factors will influence the initial implementation of the Washington CWCS in 2006. The first is development of the state budget. Unlike the federal government, Washington state agencies develop and implement their budgets on a biennial rather than annual basis. Washington state agencies are expected to prioritize program activities and establish performance measures each biennium, and the first review and possible revision of the CWCS will be timed to coincide with the development of the 2007-09 biennial budget.

Another important factor, discussed above, is completion of the ecoregional assessments (EA) in 2006; these are described in Chapter VI, Washington's Ecoregional Conservation Strategy. State Wildlife Grant (SWG) funds are being used in the development of these assessments, and the results of the assessments will influence how and where WDFW and its conservation partners direct their future CWCS implementation efforts and implementation funds within each ecoregion. New projects may be identified and funded to implement the CWCS, and existing SWG-funded projects may also be extended or expanded.

The initial CWCS program review and detailed implementation planning for State Wildlife Grants funding will be led by the Wildlife Diversity Division within WDFW, but will also involve other programs with WDFW. WDFW intends to reconvene and ask the CWCS Advisory Committee (See Appendix 11) to assist in shaping this process. Some of the factors to be considered include:

- The relative priority of habitat types beyond the current stratification of these areas.
- Integration of the CWCS into the 30-year Biodiversity Conservation Strategy currently being crafted by the new Washington Biodiversity Council.

- Coordination of multi-agency land acquisition through the Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation (IAC)
- Acceleration of coordinated conservation planning among federal and state land management agencies
- Better integration of management of marine and aquatic systems with terrestrial ecosystems, both within WDFW and among state and federal agencies.
- Incorporation of identified species and habitat conservation priorities into operational work plans within WDFW and other conservation partners. (e.g. WDFW Wildlife Program activities matrix.)
- Correlation of identified conservation actions into WDFW's cost accounting systems to assist in the development and monitoring of project budgets and relative priorities with other mandated activities.

As specific CWCS implementation needs are reviewed, projects will be designed, redefined or extended into the future to meet these needs.

D. Implementation Partners

Although the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has lead responsibility for administering Washington's allocation of federally-appropriated State Wildlife Grants (SWG), as well as developing, implementing and updating the Washington Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS), the implementation of this CWCS cannot be fully accomplished by WDFW alone.

WDFW will never be adequately funded or staffed to address all the conservation problems and issues addressed in the CWCS. Even with additional funding, wildlife conservation is almost always more effective when accomplished through working partnerships with other public land management agencies, Indian tribes, conservation groups, local governments and the private sector, especially agriculture and forest landowners.

By developing a new list of Species of Greatest Conservation Need, identifying associated priority habitats, and identifying specific conservation actions, the CWCS sets up a framework for WDFW to implement comprehensive wildlife conservation in partnership with other agencies and conservation organizations.

As other public and private partners are asked to help with CWCS implementation, WDFW will consider grants to these partners to help fund these projects. How and when these grants would be made available to other partners will be determined by WDFW as part of the initial review, possible revision and implementation of the CWCS in 2006.

The following discussion identifies some of the potential roles and responsibilities of WDFW and its major potential public and private conservation partners in implementing the Washington CWCS.

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Many of the statewide conservation strategies described in Chapter III, State Overview, and the conservation actions discussed in Chapter VI, Ecoregional Conservation Strategy, are primary responsibilities of WDFW. WDFW owns or manages about 840,000 acres of wildlife habitat and, within the agency's funding and

staffing capabilities, these public lands are managed to provide optimal benefit to Species of Greatest Conservation Need and associated habitats. As well as managing its own lands for fish and wildlife habitat and wildlife-related recreation, WDFW works to influence the management of other lands and waterways for maximum benefits to fish and wildlife, conducts research and surveys on priority species and habitats, enforces rules and regulations affecting wildlife and habitat, and assists local governments and landowners to identify and help protect important fish and wildlife habitat on private land. WDFW takes a lead role in many programs and activities related to fish and wildlife conservation, some of which are discussed in Chapter I, Introduction and Background; Chapter III, State Overview; and elsewhere in the Washington CWCS.

Other Public Land Management Agencies

Approximately 40% of the land area of Washington state is in public ownership, and a high level of management cooperation and coordination takes place between WDFW and other federal and state land management agencies, including the Washington Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, USDA Forest Service, and the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission. These public agencies have their own legislative mandates to conserve or at least consider fish and wildlife resources on the public lands and trust lands they manage. The Department of Defense and Department of Energy also own and manage thousands of acres of important wildlife habitat in Washington, and they conduct or participate in cooperative habitat and species conservation efforts with WDFW on Army, Navy and Air Force installations, as well as the Hanford Nuclear Reservation. WDFW works closely with these state and federal land managers on various fish and wildlife conservation issues, ranging from on-site habitat protection to invasive species control and grazing practices, and also cooperates with them on developing and conducting wildlife and habitat research and surveys.

Tribal Land Management Agencies

Washington's Treaty Indian tribes are important conservation partners, and they have a potentially key role in implementing the various conservation strategies outlined in the CWCS. All Treaty tribes have some responsibility for fish and wildlife conservation on their tribal lands. Under various treaties, many also have fishing and hunting rights on public land and "co-management" responsibility for harvested fish, on and off their reservations. Some tribes such as the Yakama



Nation, Colville Confederated Tribes, and Quinault Indian Nation, control and manage vast areas of wildlife habitat on their reservations. As with federal and state agencies, as well as private landowners, WDFW may need to expand its existing coordination efforts with the tribes to ensure that CWCS species and habitat priorities are recognized and addressed on tribal lands and co-management areas on public land.

Private Forest Landowners

Approximately 36 percent of Washington's forested land area is owned and managed by private forest landowners. WDFW works closely with these companies to try to

ensure that forest practices are compatible with sound management of wildlife species and habitats, and to promote responsible public recreational access to these private lands. Coordination with large private landowners often takes place within the regulatory context of the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) or the Washington Forest Practices Act, although much cooperative wildlife research and management also occurs on private lands without any regulatory requirement. WDFW works cooperatively with private forest landowners through the Washington Forest Practices Board and the Forest and Fish Agreement on policies and measures to conserve fish, wildlife and habitat on private forestlands. Many forest landowners have also adopted Habitat Conservation Plans (HCP) with federal fish and wildlife agencies to protect ESA-listed fish, wildlife and associated habitats.

Local Governments

Washington's cities and counties have a key role in identifying and protecting critical fish and wildlife habitat on private lands. Cities and counties have always done comprehensive land use planning, but their conservation responsibilities were greatly expanded with passage of Washington's Growth Management Act (GMA) by the State Legislature in 1990. Under the Act, amended in 1995, cities and counties must use "best available science" to identify and protect the values and functions of "critical areas", which are defined in the GMA to include wetlands and "fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas".

Upon completion of the CWCS and the ecoregional assessments described in Chapter VI, Washington's Ecoregional Conservation Strategy, WDFW will expand its efforts to help local governments use "best available science" in protecting important habitat. This will be done by providing good habitat mapping products to local planners and by working with them to ensure that their local GMA plans, as well as other local conservation programs such as "conservation futures" and open space property tax incentives, address the Species of Greatest Conservation Need, associated habitats, and conservation actions identified in the CWCS.

This effort to provide local habitat assessments to local governments is discussed again, to include links to county pilot projects, in Chapter III, State Overview.

Other Public and Private Conservation Partners

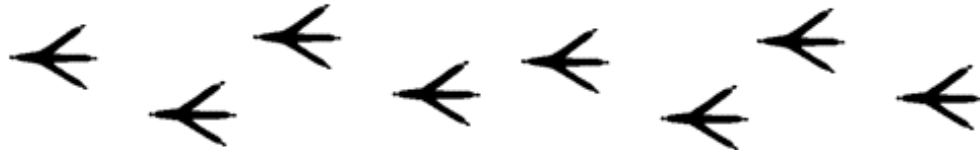
WDFW works with many other public agencies, private conservation groups and private individuals on wildlife conservation and recreation issues, and many of these agencies and organizations will be asked to partner with WDFW in implementing the Washington CWCS. WDFW is also actively involved in a number of public-private conservation partnerships such as the Salmon Recovery Funding Board and the Pacific and Intermountain West Joint Ventures (for migratory birds).

Although they do not manage large areas of habitat, federal agencies such as the National Marine Fisheries Service and Environmental Protection Agency do have regulatory responsibility for anadromous fish, marine mammals and wetlands. Washington state agencies such as the Department of Ecology, Department of Transportation, Puget Sound Action Team, and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction also have conservation and education responsibilities that may be effectively applied to the implementation of the CWCS. Local conservation districts, irrigation districts, land trusts and weed boards are important potential partners in

addressing problems such as habitat fragmentation and invasive species, which are discussed at both the ecoregional and local levels in the CWCS.

Some of WDFW's most important conservation partners are various nonprofit conservation and wildlife recreation groups and coalitions such as The Nature Conservancy, Audubon Washington, Trust for Public Land, Washington Wildlife Federation, Trout Unlimited, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Ducks Unlimited, Partners In Flight, Defenders of Wildlife and various local and regional land trusts. All of these groups, and many others, are potential partners in implementing the CWCS, through projects as varied as creating the new Pacific Education Institute, to surveying neotropical migratory birds, to restoring and enhancing habitat on public lands.

Some of WDFW's conservation partners, including many state and federal agencies, have broad conservation mandates. The role of other agencies and conservation organizations is more narrowly defined. The following matrix, while not intended to be complete or inclusive, tries to associate major responsibilities of some of these public and private partners with the statewide fish and wildlife conservation strategies discussed in Chapter III, State Overview. This loose association hopefully gives some indication of which conservation partners, other than WDFW, might be asked to help implement certain elements or recommendations in the CWCS.



OTHER PUBLIC LAND MANAGEMENT AGENCIES

CONSERVATION ACTIONS*	WDFW	DNR	USFWS	BLM	BUREAU OF RECLAM.	USDA FS	WA PARKS & RECREATION	WASHINGTON INDIAN TRIBES	PRIVATE LANDOWNERS	LOCAL GOVERNMENTS	OTHER CONSERVATION PARTNERS
Species conservation strategies	X		X					X			X
Coordinated salmon recovery	X	X				X	X	X	X	X	X
Habitat conservation on public lands and waterways	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X
Habitat conservation on private lands	X								X	X	X
Habitat acquisition	X	X	X	X						X	X
Research, monitoring and surveys of fish, wildlife and habitat	X	X	X	X		X		X			X
Direct enforcement of state laws to protect fish, wildlife and habitat	X	X									

OTHER PUBLIC LAND MANAGEMENT AGENCIES

CONSERVATION ACTIONS*	WDFW	DNR	USFWS	BLM	BUREAU OF RECLAM.	USDA FS	WA PARKS & RECREATION	WASHINGTON INDIAN TRIBES	PRIVATE LANDOWNERS	LOCAL GOVERNMENTS	OTHER CONSERVATION PARTNERS
Indirect enforcement of local, state and federal laws to protect fish, wildlife and habitat	X	X	X			X	X	X			
Wildlife information and conservation education	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X
Wildlife recreation programs	X		X					X			
Harvest management	X		X					X			
Forest practices management	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X
Biological assessment, local planning and information services	X	X	X					X		X	X

* Primary or key conservation actions.