

Connecticut Wildlife Action Plan Element Guide and Change Log

The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) has prepared this guide as a road map for Connecticut's Wildlife Action Plan (WAP). Its purpose is to help the Regional Review Team and other users to more easily navigate the WAP document. It is organized by Element and addresses sequentially (1-8) each of the eight Elements identified by Congress and the guidance for each sub-element provided by the National and Regional Advisory Acceptance Team. It also highlights, by Element, the key changes and improvements since the original 2005 document.

CONNECTICUT'S FIRST REVISION

In 2005, Connecticut completed its first WAP, formally known as its Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS), and created a blueprint for the conservation of wildlife for the following decade. The goal of the current (2015) WAP is to provide direction for statewide conservation efforts over the next decade. With this revision, Connecticut presents its updates and improvements for each of the eight Elements. It represents a vision and a strategy that the DEEP shares with its partners for conservation of fish and wildlife in the state.

In this plan, Connecticut's list of Greatest Conservation Need (GCN) species has been revised. DEEP applied the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' Best Practices and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Guidance to incorporate information on climate change. The revision also includes updated resource mapping, information gained through implementation of the first CWCS, and refined conservation threats and actions using an approach that is compatible with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and Tracking and Reporting Actions for the Conservation of Species (TRACS). It describes plans for monitoring, review and revision of the conservation targets, as well as measures to assess the effectiveness of the plan. Finally it outlines the partner, stakeholder, and public input process used during the three-year revision process. Participation by conservation partners, academic institutions, and the public was instrumental in revising the Wildlife Action Plan to make it an effective tool for conserving Connecticut's diversity of wildlife resources for future generations.

The first overarching change is the title change. In 2005, Connecticut completed an approved Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS). The 2015 revision was titled the Connecticut Wildlife Action Plan. This follows AFWA and Service guidance and reflects a more active solicitation for development and implementation with all the partners and stakeholders involved.

The second overarching change was the inclusion and application of the following guidance documents: AFWA Best Practices; State Wildlife Grants Effectiveness Measures; National and Regional Service Guidance; and the key regional projects, including Regional Conservation Need (RCN) projects and the Northeast Synthesis and Lexicon for each of the Eight required Elements.

THE EIGHT REQUIRED ELEMENTS

An essential component of Connecticut’s WAP involves meeting the required Elements identified by Congress. Addressing the eight Elements makes the state eligible to receive federal funding in the form of State Wildlife Grants, a key wildlife diversity conservation program for states administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Element 1

Information on the distribution and abundance of species of wildlife, including low and declining populations as the State fish and wildlife agency deems appropriate, that are indicative of the diversity and health of the State's wildlife.

Element 1 Sub-elements	WAP Section	Tables or Figures
A. The Plan indicates sources of information (e.g., literature, data bases, agencies, individuals) on wildlife abundance and distribution consulted during the planning process.	Chapter 1 Chapter 1 References Appendix 1a Appendix 7 Appendix 8	
B. The Plan includes information about both abundance and distribution for species in all major groups to the extent that data are available. There are plans for acquiring information about species for which adequate abundance and/or distribution information is unavailable.	Chapter 1 Appendix 1b Appendix 1c Appendix 1d	Figures 1.1-1.12 Tables 1.1-1.5 Tables 1.7-1.13
C. The Plan identifies low and declining populations to the extent data are available.	Chapter 1 Appendix 1b Appendix 1c	Tables 1.1-1.5 Tables 1.7-1.13
D. All major groups of wildlife have been considered or an explanation is provided as to why they were not (e.g., including reference to implemented marine fisheries management plans). The state may indicate whether these groups are to be included in a future Plan revision.	Chapter 1 Appendix 1a Appendix 1b	Figures 1.1-1.12 Tables 1.1-1.5 Tables 1.7-1.13
E. The Plan describes the process used to select the species in greatest need of conservation. The quantity of information in the Plan is determined by the state, with input from its partners.	Chapter 1 Appendix 1b Appendix 1c	Tables 1.7-1.13

Chapter 1 presents updated summary status information for species with low and declining populations as well as other criteria to be considered as GCN species. Chapter 1 includes GCN plants which were not included in 2005. Existing designations, including the Northeast Lexicon recommended criteria, were used to develop an initial list of Connecticut’s GCN species. The Northeast Lexicon describes a customized language and data framework for each of the eight required elements for state WAPs. The best sources for this information were listed in Appendix 1a. Appendix 1b lists the regional species of greatest conservation need (RSGCN) while Appendix 1c lists Connecticut’s GCN species. Appendix 1d lists the Regional Conservation Need (RCN) projects that Connecticut participated in to provide information on its GCN species.

The process followed the Connecticut State Endangered Species update process and utilized the standing committee of experts to update the list (Endangered Species Act Scientific Advisory Committees - ESSAC). Three qualitative categories (most important, very important, and important) were used to highlight the relative ranking of GCN species. Chapter 3 identifies any need for additional data, and Chapter 4 and Appendix 4 list the general statewide and locally

2015 Connecticut Wildlife Action Plan

specific conservation actions required to address these research, survey, inventory or monitoring needs. Monitoring action performance to address these threats is presented in Chapter 5.

New for Element 1 (in Chapter 1 and Appendix 1) is an overview of Connecticut’s wildlife within a regional context that encompasses thirteen states from Maine to Virginia and the District of Columbia. The Northeast Fish and Wildlife Diversity Technical Committee (NEFDTC) of the Northeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies’ (NEAFWA) updated regional species of greatest conservation need list (RSGCN, Appendix 1c) is included. The Northeast (NE) Lexicon and Synthesis, which developed criteria and supported the process of identifying GCN species, was incorporated and applied to update this Element.

The 2015 list of GCN species for Connecticut included 567 species, which was 92 more species than appeared on the list in 2005. The 2015 version also included 100 plant species. The GCN mammals list for 2015 had minimal changes. The most important change was that all bat species (little brown bat, northern long-eared bat, and tri-colored bat) were elevated from a tier status of important to most important, due to severe regional population declines caused by white-nose syndrome. Herpetofauna had only one new addition, the Mudpuppy. It was listed as important because of its recent addition to the State Endangered Species list as a Special Concern species and its relative scarcity. Birds had numerous tier changes and removals for the 2015 list. In total, 53 species were removed from the bird list. Birds also had 42 species re-listed for 2015, with tier changes. A total of 59 new invertebrate species were added to the 2015 list and a total of 13 invertebrate species were removed. There were also six new fish species added to the GCN list.

Connecticut has elected to include plants on the list of GCN species because of their need for conservation and their importance to ecological diversity (Table 1.11). Conservation actions implemented for these species through other funding sources will provide broad ecosystem benefits. The GCN plant list includes those listed as globally rare (G1-G3) by NatureServe, species with restricted geographic ranges, and species that serve as important host plants for GCN invertebrate species. Of the 100 plant species added, 86 were in the important tier.

Element 2

Descriptions of locations and relative condition of key habitats and community types essential to conservation of species identified in the 1st element.

Element 2 Sub-elements	WAP Section	Tables or Figures
A. The Plan provides a reasonable explanation for the level of detail provided; if insufficient, the Plan identifies the types of future actions that will be taken to obtain the information.	Chapter 2 Chapter 4 Appendix 2a Appendix 2b Appendix 4	
B. Key habitats and their relative conditions are described in enough detail such that the state can determine where (i.e., in which regions, watersheds, or landscapes within the state) and what conservation actions need to take place.	Chapter 2 Chapter 4 Appendix 2a Appendix 2b Appendix 3 Appendix 4	Figures 2.1-2.10 Tables 2.1-2.11

Chapter 2 describes the process of identifying key habitats essential to GCN species, which included input and analysis by DEEP staff, the ESSAC, and key partners and stakeholders. Using information from existing ecoregion and vegetative classification systems, an initial list of habitats important to wildlife in Connecticut was developed and repeatedly refined by input from these groups. Appendix 2 lists all the vegetative communities and the status for each of the key habitats. Chapter 3 identifies any need for additional data, and Chapter 4 and appendix 4 list the general statewide and specific conservation actions to address these research, survey,

2015 Connecticut Wildlife Action Plan

inventory or monitoring needs. Monitoring action performance to address these threats is presented in Chapter 5.

Updates and improvements to the means of identifying and describing the Key habitats included the use of several key regional and state tools and datasets. The Northeast Lexicon and Synthesis (which includes many important northeast RCN habitat advancements and projects) were incorporated and applied, to develop criteria and support the process of updating, identifying, and prioritizing this Element.

The 2015 habitat selection process was significantly improved by using new state and regional classification systems. The list was compared and cross-referenced with National Vegetation Classification Standard (NVCS), NatureServe, Northeast Terrestrial Wildlife Habitat Classification System (NETHCS) and Northeast Aquatic Habitat Classification System (NEAHCS)(Appendix 2a). One important change for 2015 was the reclassification of key habitats from 12 in 2005 to 10 in 2015. Significant improvement in mapping allowed information on all habitats occurring in Connecticut to be presented in a more streamlined and efficient manner. DEEP staff used these data to identify 10 key habitat classifications and 46 vegetative communities. Each of these vegetative communities has been referenced to Metzler and Barrett’s ecoregions.

The best available information and expert opinion on the location and relative ecological condition of each of the 10 key habitat types, as well as the status of inventory and mapping data for each habitat within Connecticut, are shown in Appendix 2. Representative sites and priority areas within the habitats have also been identified. GCN species and key habitats are the foundational targets used to identify threats and create actions to address these threats, as outlined in the WAP.

Significant mapping improvements resulted from a high priority action identified in the 2005 CWCS: to secure better digital data for habitats and GCN species. A contracted project developed collaboratively with the University of Connecticut (UConn) provided additional mapping of key habitats for this WAP revision and included updated local, state, regional and national spatial data sources (see Chapter 4).

Element 3

Descriptions of problems which may adversely affect species identified in the 1st element or their habitats, and priority research and survey efforts needed to identify factors which may assist in restoration and improved conservation of these species and habitats.

Element 3 Sub-elements	WAP Section	Tables or Figures
A. The Plan indicates sources of information (e.g., literature, databases, agencies, or individuals) used to determine the problems or threats.	Chapter 3 Chapter 4 Appendix 1a Appendix 3 Appendix 4	Tables 1.1-1.5 Table 1.7 Table 2.1 Table 3.1 Tables 3.3-3.5 Figures 2.7-2.-10 Figures 3.1-3.5 Figures 3.7-3.8
B. The threats/problems are described in sufficient detail to develop focused conservation actions (for example, “increased highway mortalities” or “point source pollution” rather than generic descriptions such as “development” or “poor water quality”).	Chapter 3 Chapter 4 Appendix 3	Table 3.1 Table 3.6 Table 3.9 Table 3.10
C. The Plan considers threats/problems, regardless of their origins (local, state, regional, national and international), where relevant to the state’s species and habitats.	Chapter 3 Chapter 4 Appendix 3	Figures 3.1-3.8

2015 Connecticut Wildlife Action Plan

Element 3 Sub-elements	WAP Section	Tables or Figures
D. If available information is insufficient to describe threats/problems, research and survey efforts are identified to obtain needed information.	Chapter 3 Chapter 4 Appendix 3 Appendix 4	
E. The priority research and survey needs, and resulting products, are described sufficiently to allow for the development of research and survey projects after the Plan is approved.	Chapter 3 Chapter 4 Appendix 3 Appendix 4	

Chapter 3 provides an update for the threats to GCN species and their habitats in Connecticut. Some of these threats are global or national, while others are regional, statewide, or local. They include threats or problems that stress wildlife (species and/or habitat) as well as management challenges caused by inadequate data, insufficient resources, or other limitations. The Northeast Lexicon was applied to code all threats. This represents a crosswalk of threats to TRACs system and includes the action drivers or needs that complement the IUCN system. Appendix 3 provides the compiled list of all threats identified from key plans and through the input from a series of 10 workshops for partners, stakeholders and the public. Chapter 3 identifies any need for additional data, and Chapter 4 and Appendix 4 list the general statewide and locally specific conservation actions to address these research, survey, inventory or monitoring needs. Monitoring action performance to address these threats is presented in Chapter 5.

Threats affecting GCN species or their habitats in Connecticut were determined using the 2005 CWCS list as a foundation that was then supplemented by a review of the best available information from more than 120 existing conservation programs and plans (Appendix 1a). Climate change is an example of a threat where more updated information was incorporated into the threats determination, assessment and ranking process for this revision.

The IUCN classification system was used to describe and present threats in a consistent way, as recommended by the Northeast Lexicon and Synthesis. The threats identified were reviewed iteratively by DEEP staff, with stakeholder input, and then ranked by risk (level of impact considering severity and likelihood of occurring). The Northeast Lexicon provided definitions for the severity, reversibility, immediacy, spatial extent, certainty, and likelihood of threats.

Element 4

Descriptions of conservation actions determined to be necessary to conserve the identified species and habitats and priorities for implementing such actions.

Element 4 Sub-elements	WAP Section	Tables or Figures
A. The Plan identifies how conservation actions address identified threats to species of greatest conservation need and their habitats.	Chapter 4 Appendix 3 Appendix 4	
B. The Plan describes conservation actions sufficiently to guide implementation of those actions through the development and execution of specific projects and programs.	Chapter 4 Appendix 4	
C. The Plan links conservation actions to objectives and indicators that will facilitate monitoring and performance measurement of those conservation actions (outlined in Element #5).	Chapter 4 Chapter 5 Appendix 4	

2015 Connecticut Wildlife Action Plan

Element 4 Sub-elements	WAP Section	Tables or Figures
D. The Plan describes conservation actions (where relevant to the state’s species and habitats) that could be addressed by Federal agencies or regional, national or international partners and shared with other states.	Chapter 4 Chapter 7 Appendix 4 Appendix 7	
E. If available information is insufficient to describe needed conservation actions, the Plan identifies research or survey needs for obtaining information to develop specific conservation actions.	Chapter 4 Appendix 4	Table 1.7 Table 5.2
F. The Plan identifies the relative priority of conservation actions.	Chapter 4 Appendix 4	Figures 4.1-4.13

Chapter 4 presents more than a hundred highest priority inventory, research, and monitoring needs, along with conservation actions. An updated and expanded process was conducted to identify those conservation actions that would best address the threats and problems identified in Chapter 3 while protecting the GCN species and key habitats discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. Conservation Opportunity Areas (COAs) are discussed and presented in Chapter 4. Appendix 4 lists the additional actions ranked lower than the highest priority tier. Where information was insufficient to identify conservation actions, the process focused on identifying research, inventory, and monitoring needs to obtain such missing information, outlining priorities and tangible products designed to fill these information gaps. These are listed in Chapter 4 at 3 levels; statewide, habitat and taxon. Action prioritization involved key partners and stakeholders, enabling the WAP to be implemented by these federal, state and local governments, non-governmental organizations, universities and other partners. Monitoring action performance to address these threats is presented in Chapter 5. It followed State Wildlife Grants Effectiveness Measures guidance and used TRACS indicators.

Conservation actions for 2015 were developed using a similar process, with the 2005 top actions serving as the foundation. Identifying and prioritizing conservation actions began with the WAP Core Team and DEEP staff review of the original 2005 actions. Progress on these actions since the 2005 CWCS was evaluated as along with the need to continue the action as ranked using the NE Lexicon criteria. Examples of key accomplishments are highlighted under each action category in this chapter.

A crosswalk was conducted between IUCN and TRACS classification systems, and this resulted in a unified, comprehensive threat classification system as recommended in the AFWA Best Practices and developed in coordination with the NE Lexicon for Threats and Actions. TRACS indicators were used to measure performance with State Wildlife Grants Effectiveness Measures outcomes as a way of assessing GCN species and key habitat responses to actions.

Ten public meetings were held across the state in an effort to identify additional conservation actions and solicit input from a diverse group of partners, stakeholders and the public. Through this process, a new list of actions was compiled and then reviewed by DEEP Wildlife and Fish Divisions for final input and prioritization. Staff identified any gaps, made additional suggestions, and reviewed the more than 300 actions on the working list. These were then ranked using the NE Lexicon criteria. Partner input was requested on the draft ranks, and draft actions were posted on the web for public review and comment. All staff and public comments were recorded and compiled, resulting in the list of conservation actions that are presented in the 2015 WAP.

Recurring patterns and priorities emerged that crossed taxonomic and ecological boundaries in the process of identifying conservation actions for GCN species and key habitats. These more general, statewide conservation actions were recognized to have broad impacts across taxa and habitats. Chapter 4 focuses on the priority conservation actions that address these threats to Connecticut’s GCN species or taxa. For each of the key habitats, GCN species are listed as most Important, very Important, or important. Threats, and conservation actions and research/survey/monitoring needs are identified for each habitat. Appendix 4 contains all the

2015 Connecticut Wildlife Action Plan

actions that did not receive the highest priority ranking, whether these were identified by staff, stakeholders, partners, or the public. This appendix indicates how these actions were addressed or included in the broader actions outlined in Chapter 4. It also indicates which specific actions from Appendix 4 can be used to identify specific tasks for implementation.

Element 5

Descriptions of the proposed plans for monitoring species identified in the 1st element and their habitats, for monitoring the effectiveness of the conservation actions proposed in the 4th element, and for adapting these conservation actions to respond appropriately to new information or changing conditions.

Element 5 Sub-elements	WAP Section	Tables or Figures
A. The Plan describes plans for monitoring species identified in Element #1, and their habitats.	Chapter 5 Chapter 4 Appendix 1	Table 5.1-Table 5.2
B. The Plan describes how the outcomes of the conservation actions will be monitored.	Chapter 5 Chapter 4 Appendix 4	Tables 5.1-5.2 Figures 5.1-5.8
C. If monitoring is not identified for a species or species group, the Plan explains why it is not appropriate, necessary or possible.	Chapter 5	
D. Monitoring is to be accomplished at one of several levels including individual species, guilds, or natural communities.	Chapter 5 Chapter 4 Appendix 4	
E. The monitoring utilizes or builds on existing monitoring and survey systems or explains how information will be obtained to determine the effectiveness of conservation actions.	Chapter 5	Tables 5.1-5.2 Figure 5.1
F. The monitoring considers the appropriate geographic scale to evaluate the status of species or species groups and the effectiveness of conservation actions.	Chapter 4 Chapter 5 Appendix 4	
G. The Plan is adaptive in that it allows for evaluating conservation actions and implementing new actions accordingly.	Chapter 5 Chapter 6	Figures 5.1-5.2

Chapter 5 presents a rigorous monitoring and adaptive management framework that will be used to assess the status of GCN species and habitats and to monitor the effectiveness of WAP conservation actions. Connecticut’s approach identifies existing monitoring efforts and tools currently used by DEEP or its partners to assess GCN species, key habitats, and related issues as listed in the plans and programs in Appendices 1a and 5a. If monitoring is not identified for a species or species group/taxon, Chapter 4 of this WAP describes monitoring actions for other species which occupy the same habitats. These recommendations are prioritized to benefit the overall habitat, community, or assemblage, including many other GCN species. In cases where not enough information exists to monitor a species or group, or where monitoring protocols have not yet been developed, this need is documented and followed by a conservation action intended to address that information need. Monitoring action performance to address threats is presented in Chapter 5.

A major improvement in this chapter is a description of how Connecticut will use tools for information management and conservation planning to track the implementation and effectiveness of conservation actions at the appropriate geographic scale. These innovative tools include the Northeast Regional Monitoring and Performance Reporting Framework, the State Wildlife Grants Effectiveness Measures Project, the Northeast Lexicon Project, and the national TRACS database. The framework starts with a specific conservation action, then a basic results chain is created linking the action to relevant threats, habitats and species. Next,

2015 Connecticut Wildlife Action Plan

indicators and measures are selected for each step in the chain, and monitoring data are used to track and populate those indicators. Information about the results chain, indicators, and measures will be captured in the TRACS database. Taken together, the measurements of these indicators will provide the essential information needed for evaluating the response of GCN species and key habitats and thus the effectiveness of conservation actions. Conservation actions will be monitored and measured throughout the 10-year implementation of the WAP.

Element 6

Descriptions of procedures to review the Strategy/Plan at intervals not to exceed ten years.

Element 6 Sub-elements	WAP Section	Tables or Figures
A. The state describes the process that will be used to review the Plan within the next 10 years.	Chapter 6	

Chapter 6 describes the process and the timeframe by which Connecticut’s WAP will be reviewed and updated. The goal is to keep the document as up-to-date as possible. Knowledge of the status of Connecticut’s wildlife and the conditions that affect wildlife management are constantly changing. For that reason, the current WAP is seen as a dynamic document.

This chapter also describes the review process and presents a schedule for the review of other conservation and management plans and identifies the agencies responsible. Information from these plans will inform the ongoing review of the Connecticut WAP. The status of GCN species will be coordinated with the DEEP’s statutorily mandated five-year updates of Connecticut’s Endangered Species Act (CT-ESA). Listed species reviews and updates are conducted using the DEEP Bureau of Natural Resources (BNR) biologists and the ESSAC.

Evaluation of the conservation actions recommended in this document will be continuous as new information becomes available. Annual measures for reporting accomplishments are conducted through TRACS and Federal Aid project reporting. Internal review and revision will be conducted on a biennial basis to coincide with renewal of the federal grant agreement. This will allow DEEP to address species or habitat responses relating to management activities that occur within a relatively short time period. Evaluations of survey data and project needs at the beginning of each grant agreement period will allow BNR staff to incorporate new information needs or specific projects as priorities or conditions change. Full revision will be completed in ten years (2025).

Element 7

Descriptions of the plans for coordinating, to the extent feasible, the development, implementation, review, and revision of the Plan-Strategy with Federal, State, and local agencies and Indian tribes that manage significant land and water areas within the State or administer programs that significantly affect the conservation of identified species and habitats.

Element 7 Sub-elements	WAP Section	Tables or Figures
A. The state describes the extent of its coordination with and efforts to involve Federal, state and local agencies, and Indian Tribes in the development of its Plan.	Chapter 7 Appendix 7 Appendix 8a Appendix 8b Appendix 8c	Table 7.1 Table 7.2 Table 7.4
B. The state describes its continued coordination with these agencies and tribes in the implementation, review and revision of its Plan.	Chapter 4 Chapter 6 Chapter 7 Appendix 4 Appendix 7	

2015 Connecticut Wildlife Action Plan

Chapter 7 describes extensive coordination with federal, state and local agencies and the Mohegan and Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nations as partners in the development of the 2015 WAP. In addition, DEEP's Wildlife Division established an effective internal WAP administrative framework to solicit input from all levels of staff. The following appendices include information pertinent to element 7. Appendix 7 provides the framework for conserving the state's natural resources. It describes the CT WAP process development plan with key timeframes for collaboration with partners and provides a list of the partners and stakeholders involved throughout the planning process to facilitate and coordinate future implementation.

External partners participated in technical teams to guide the development of the GCN species and key habitats list. Taxa teams created in 2005 continued their work and coordinated with the established ESSAC tasked to address the needs of both endangered and GCN species in Connecticut. This external input on ecological data and issues included multiple academic institutions and agency and nongovernmental organization (NGO) staff. Key partners were asked to participate on a team or through consultation during the process.

One major accomplishment and advancement from the 2005 plan was that several key partners incorporated the 2005 WAP conservation targets (GCN species and key habitats) into their programs and priorities. A key example is the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and its extensive work with private landowner programs, focusing notably on the New England cottontail as well as other shrubland and grassland species.

Specific techniques to be used during the next ten years of WAP implementation are similar to those identified as most effective during the WAP development stages. DEEP BNR will take the lead in assuring on-going cooperation with these groups. All entities that were contacted during the WAP revision will be encouraged to include the approved WAP revision into their plan revisions and programs. Correspondence encouraging implementation and meetings to discuss collaborative implementation will be offered to each group. Finally, partners will be intimately involved in the 2025 revision of this document, as they will continue to play a major role in identifying GCN species and key habitats, as well as in updating and identifying new threats and actions for the next decade of WAP implementation. This level of collaboration will ensure that the Connecticut WAP has continuing support from federal, state and local agencies and from Indian tribal nations, and that wildlife are considered at every level of planning and governance.

Element 8

Descriptions of the necessary public participation in the development, revision, and implementation of the Plan.

Element 8 Sub-elements	WAP Section	Tables or Figures
A. The state describes the extent of its efforts to involve the public in the development of its Plan.	Chapter 8 Chapter 4 Appendices 8a-8d	
B. The state describes its continued public involvement in the implementation and revision of its Plan.	Chapter 8 Chapter 4 Appendix 8b Appendix 8d	

Chapter 8 addresses Element 8 and describes efforts to seek stakeholder and public participation in the development of the WAP. Appendix 8a identifies the key non-governmental organizations (NGO) and their programs and projects that relate to the WAP. Appendix 8b identifies the many stakeholders, collaborators, and experts contacted during WAP development. Appendix 8c describes the design of the public input plan used in this process. The mechanisms developed to aid in public participation are presented in Appendix 8d.

A significant improvement in this 2015 revision process was the online posting of WAP draft chapters and sections (more than 6 months in some cases) for public review. Press releases,

2015 Connecticut Wildlife Action Plan

social media, and partner and stakeholder networks and newsletters were used to solicit review and feedback on each WAP piece. Open, participatory events were used to solicit additional information and input from the public at large. A series of 10 public meetings were held across the state, utilizing partner facilities, and these meetings provided significant input and feedback on the development of each element of the WAP.

Plans for implementation of the 2015 WAP include ongoing programs and presentations similar to those described above. The goal is to continue to engage Connecticut residents, potentially affected interest groups, and stakeholders during the implementation and revision processes. Meetings will be conducted annually, as collaborations continue throughout the timeframe for this WAP revision. Efforts to reach out to these groups will be especially strong when they can provide assistance with particular conservation actions. Stakeholders and the public will be an ongoing part of the annual program updates and evaluation. Solicitation of input and technical information from expert taxa committees in the form of peer review and evaluation will occur on a regular basis to provide updates to the GCN species status review. Finally, stakeholders and the public will be intimately involved in the next 10-year revision of this document, as they will continue to play a major role in identifying GCN species and key habitats, as well as updating and identifying new threats and actions for the next decade of WAP implementation. Stakeholders and the public will be kept informed of any updates, and participatory events can be used to solicit additional information. Enhancing stakeholder awareness of and participation in implementation is essential to the success of this plan. It is hoped that this process will support community-based conservation efforts, foster land stewardship, and promote a sound environmental ethic.