

## Memorandum

**To:** State Directors  
**From:** Duane L. Shroufe, Chair, IAFWA Teaming with Wildlife Committee  
**Subject:** Recommended Process and Criteria for Acceptance of State Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies (Plans)  
**Date:** September 15, 2003

**Contacts:** Terry B. Johnson, Arizona Game and Fish Department, (602) 789-3507, [teebeej@gf.state.az.us](mailto:teebeej@gf.state.az.us)

**The Need:** Each State, Territory, and the District of Columbia (hereafter collectively called the "States") accepting funds under the State Wildlife Grants program and its predecessor Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program is obligated to submit a Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (= Plan) to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (acting on behalf of the Secretary of the Interior) by October 1, 2005. Each of these plans must address seven elements established by the enabling legislation, and also must document that the public has had meaningful opportunities to participate in developing the plans.

**Recommendation:** IAFWA has endorsed the TWW Committee recommendation that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service establish the following process for conducting the review necessary to determine whether such strategies/plans have satisfactorily addressed the seven elements, and documented adequate public participation.

1. Establish a National Acceptance Advisory Team (NAAT), including the following: one employee from the FWS Arlington Federal Assistance Office staff; one Federal Assistance staff member per FWS Region; one IAFWA employee; and three employees from State Wildlife Agencies.
2. The NAAT should meet electronically as often as necessary, and in person at least three times, from March through September 2005 to review CWCSs submitted to FWS by the States. NAAT in-person meetings should be held in the location (i.e. hub airport city) most central to the participants. State expenses for participation in NAAT meetings should be borne by FWS, using administrative funds derived from the State Wildlife Grants program. The workload expectation for this Team is one full week per month, from March through September 2005.
3. The NAAT should use the attached Checklist as its framework for evaluating each State CWCS and determining whether to recommend acceptance by the FWS Director.
4. If the NAAT determines that a State does not appear to meet the standards requisite to acceptance in one or more areas of the CWCS, then the NAAT should work directly with that State to identify an expeditious and appropriate remedy for such problems.
5. The NAAT should provide monthly briefings on CWCS review progress to FWS leadership, and to the IAFWA Executive Director and TWW Committee Chair.

Finally, the Committee recommends that each State integrate into its CWCS development process a rigorous self-evaluation using the attached criteria, to maximize the likelihood that FWS will accept the final CWCS.

**WCRP/SWG Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (Plan)  
Guidelines for Review and Recommendation of Acceptance**

State/Territory \_\_\_\_\_

**1<sup>st</sup> Element. 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.**

Yes  No Has the State included substantial information on the abundance of low and declining wildlife species populations?

Yes  No Has the State included substantial information on the distribution of low and declining wildlife species populations?

**2<sup>nd</sup> Element. Descriptions of locations and relative condition of key habitats and community types essential to conservation of species identified in the 1<sup>st</sup> element.**

Yes  No Has the State described the locations and relative conditions of key habitats and community types for these wildlife species as required?

**3<sup>rd</sup> Element. Descriptions of problems which may adversely affect species identified in the 1<sup>st</sup> 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.**

Yes  No Has the State described these problems for these species in enough detail such that conservation actions can be developed to solve them or specific additional research or survey needs can be determined?

Yes  No Has the State identified and prioritized (to the extent applicable) the additional research and survey efforts needed to identify these key factors?

**4<sup>th</sup> Element. Descriptions of conservation actions determined to be necessary to conserve the identified species and habitats and priorities for implementing such actions.**

Yes  No Has the State described the conservation actions deemed to be necessary with enough specificity to allow for or promote implementation of those actions?

Yes  No Has the State indicated the priority for implementing these actions based on the needs of the species described above?

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

Yes  No Has the State described the proposed plans for monitoring (i) these species and their habitats, and (ii) the effectiveness of the conservation actions taken?

Yes  No Has the State described its plan for adapting the conservation actions deemed necessary to respond appropriately to new information and changing conditions?

6<sup>th</sup> Element. **Descriptions of procedures to review the Plan at intervals not to exceed ten years.**

Yes  No Has the State described the process it will use to review the Plan and on what frequency (not > 10 years)?

7<sup>th</sup> Element. **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**

Yes  No Has the State described its substantial coordination with relevant individual Federal, State, local agencies, and Indian Tribes in the development of this Plan, and described its plan for coordination with these agencies in the implementation, review and revision of the Plan?

8<sup>th</sup> Element. **Descriptions of the necessary public participation in the development, revision, and implementation of the Plan.**

Yes  No Has the State described how quality public participation was obtained in the development of the Plan?

Yes  No Has the State described its intent for quality public participation in the revision and implementation of the Plan?

Additional Notes (be specific for any "No" above):

Team Vote: Recommended for acceptance: Yes  No



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**Contacts:** Tim Hess, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, (703) 358-1837,  
[tim\\_hess@fws.gov](mailto:tim_hess@fws.gov)

Terry B. Johnson, Arizona Game and Fish Department, (602) 789-3507,  
[teebeej@gf.state.az.us](mailto:teebeej@gf.state.az.us)

**The Need:** States, Territories, and the District of Columbia engaged in developing a Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (= Plan) may need assistance on process and content between now and October 1, 2005 (the submittal deadline).



**Recommendation:** IAFWA has endorsed the TWW Committee recommendation that FWS establish regional CWCS Development Assistance Teams (DATs) to facilitate development of the CWCSs from now through submittal to FWS in 2005. DATs should provide advice (online or otherwise) to the States, be customer friendly, and invite open discussion of the emerging plans. Each DAT should be led by a Federal Assistance employee from that FWS region, and include such individuals from State Wildlife Agencies as are available and willing to serve, and (as appropriate) other stakeholders invited to participate. Hopefully, at least one State SWG Work Group member will serve on each DAT, to provide additional continuity with the National Acceptance Advisory Team.

Tim Hess, Bob Anderson, and John Organ (FWS employees and SWG Work Group members) will communicate further with each FWS region about creation of these regional assistance teams. It is vitally important that FWS employees assigned to these DATs communicate with each other across regional bounds, to ensure that assistance on guidance do not vary among FWS regions.

The TWW Committee also recommends that, within each FWS Region, the States and their Federal Aid counterparts should meet periodically to discuss CWCS progress, and to facilitate efforts to integrate and blend planning approaches, substantive content and coverage, and conservation priorities across state borders. Such meetings should also be used to develop, as much as possible, commonalities in language among the plans of States within a given Region.