

# Strategic Habitat Conservation Presentation

*at the Texas Wildlife Diversity Conference*

## Federal and State Partnerships

Brian Hanson, the Coordinator of the Implementation Team for Strategic Habitat Conservation (SHC) spoke to the participants of the Texas Wildlife Diversity Conference, January 17-19, 2008, at the Houston Zoo. Brian Hanson described the approach adopted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) that will conserve wildlife populations and the ecological functions that sustain them. He further described the four elements of SHC, examples of activities in Texas that demonstrate these elements, and other agencies that use similar approaches. The TPWD and the Nature Conservancy have similar approaches to conservation.

Strategy Habitat Conservation will improve the conservation of population and the ecological functions that sustain them. SHC is a framework of four functional elements that must occur in an adaptive management loop. The four elements are:

1. *Biological Planning* identify priority species and establish species population objectives, identify limiting factors;
2. *Conservation Design* develop habitat objectives for desired landscape conditions;
3. *Conservation Delivery* implement on-the-ground conservation actions;
4. *Monitoring and Research* monitor and evaluate conservation delivery.

## Examples included

### *Ocelot in Texas*

The ocelot is federally listed as endangered and the greatest threat to this species is fragmentation of habitat. The Service, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) and The Nature Conservancy, sought out a willing landowner whose property is adjacent to the tracts held by the Service. The TPWD received a grant from the Fish and Wildlife Service from a grant through the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Division of the Service. The Service awarded TPWD a \$438,000 Endangered Species Recovery Acquisition grant to purchase a conservation easement which will

protect this habitat in perpetuity. The conservation easement links the property with two Service tracts, creating a travel corridor for the ocelot. The action would address the limiting factor for a priority species, and is an example of element 3 of SHC—*Conservation Delivery*.

### *Texas Mid-Coast Initiative*

This area includes 16 counties along the coast between Galveston Bay to Corpus Christi. The Gulf Coast Joint Venture began planning by establishing a population objective for duck species for midwinter populations, this is an example of element 1, *Biological Planning*. Habitat types were then chosen that would address populations of ducks, element 2 of SHC, *Conservation Design*.

### *Texas Prairie Wetlands Project*

The project is a partnership between Ducks Unlimited, TPWD, Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program of the Service. The goal of the project is to deliver the strategic habitat conservation goals provided by the Gulf Coast Joint Venture in support of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. This wetlands project has conserved, restored and enhanced over 38,000 acres of wetlands since 1991.

### *The West Bay Conservation Corridor Project*

The goals are to restore 180 acres of intertidal and supratidal marsh and conserve 3,000 acres of coastal prairie and salt marsh. These habitats would improve habitat for the mottled duck, a species that is declining. The project is a partnership between TPWD, Galveston Bay Estuary Program, Scenic



*Typical high-quality salamander habitat.*

FWS Photograph

Galveston, Galveston Bay Foundation, Harborwalk Development and the Coastal Program of the Service.

The 2008 Wildlife Diversity Conference brought together conservationists in Texas to discuss their work and elicit discussions about the Texas Wildlife Action Plan (TWAP) that was completed by the TPWD. The TWAP will lead to a new era of coordinated strategic planning to better identify problems and solutions on a regional and nationwide basis. The conference included sessions on Implementation through Partnerships; Aquatic Implementation; Implementation on Private Lands; and Research on Nongame species—Herpetile, Aquatic, Invertebrate, Avian and Mammal.

## For Further Information

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