

**Strategic Habitat Conservation:
Some Frequently Asked Questions**

7-31-14

The following are some key questions and responses about why and how the FWS is changing.

Why does it make sense to adopt a FWS-wide conservation and business framework?

We are losing species and their habitats at an alarming rate and need to clearly and strategically focus our resources and expertise on where we can have the greatest positive impact on fish, wildlife and plants for current and future generations. To do so, we must: (1) Identify population and management objectives for species that we care about, starting at ecologically meaningful scales; (2) address as a unified FWS and with partners as possible the most significant conservation challenges; (3) Pool resources and talent and align and target work to ensure efficient and effective conservation delivery; and (4) Measure and evaluate progress, including both successes and failures, to continually improve our strategies and actions. Strategic Habitat Conservation is the conservation and business framework we adopted to consistently and transparently achieve these goals.

How is FWS-wide adoption of SHC different from what we're already doing?

Full adoption of Strategic Habitat Conservation as framework for the FWS should: enable our workforce to plan, design and deliver conservation actions more strategically; allow for greater transparency via a priority and science-driven conservation investment decision-making process; result in increased accountability by measuring our progress – both as a Service and employees/partners; operate in a more coordinated and collaborative way by focusing programmatic efforts towards shared outcomes; work with partners to maximize our landscape-scale conservation results; communicate and engage with our workforce to ensure their voices are heard and they have opportunities to contribute to this effort; and ultimately become more relevant to the communities we serve.

What is the status of the Draft Technical Guidance (DTG) and what happened to the comments that were submitted by staff and others?

We received a substantial number of comments from staff and partners, and those were compiled, synthesized and considered by a team of FWS and state agency staff. Many of the comments were incorporated into subsequent revisions of the DTG that was submitted for external peer review in March, 2014.

What are the results of the peer review of the DTG?

An external peer review was conducted to consider the scientific quality and credibility of the DTG. The peer review report indicated need for significant reorganization and better focus and recommended a more thorough analysis of the literature on the different uses of surrogates,

including their success and failures to achieve intended conservation goals. The results of the peer review are being taken seriously and the FWS will be contracting with subject matter experts to address the issues raised in the report.

When will a copy of the peer review be made available to staff?

The final peer review report and our response will be posted on the FWS SHC webpage on August 1.

How will the DTG revision process affect how we move forward?

Regions will continue to move forward in their biological planning and conservation design efforts for landscapes within their regions, recognizing that this is an adaptive process. We must take chances, learn as we go, and continue to use information that we gain to evolve and change.

What's the urgency? Can't we wait and implement this once we've seen if it works?

The urgency is the rapid rate of loss species and habitats and the need to be more accountable to the public that we serve. The sooner we get started on identifying what and where we believe we can have the greatest conservation impact, the sooner we can get resources on the ground working towards common biological objectives.