

**FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT**

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OVERVIEW

1.1 What is the purpose of this chapter? This chapter:

A. Establishes Strategic Habitat Conservation (SHC) as an adaptive management, landscape-scale approach that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is using to pursue its mission in the 21st Century, and

B. Describes how the Service uses SHC at multiple scales to be more effective and efficient at conserving fish and wildlife populations through meaningful collaboration, habitat protection, restoration, and other management activities.

1.2 What is the scope of this chapter? This chapter applies to all Service employees, programs, and activities. The policy is related to planning, implementing, and evaluating conservation activities.

1.3 What are the authorities for this policy?

A. The Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 661-667e).

B. 522 Departmental Manual (DM) 1, Adaptive Management Implementation Policy.

C. 604 DM 1, Implementing Landscape-Level Approaches to Resource Management.

1.4 What are the objectives of this chapter? Our objectives are to:

A. Describe how SHC supports the Service's mission of working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people by:

(1) Identifying conservation actions and outcomes necessary to sustain desired levels of fish and wildlife populations,

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(2) Identifying where and how to deliver habitat conservation efficiently and effectively, and

(3) Measuring and evaluating progress to continually improve our strategies and actions.

B. Ensure consistent Servicewide implementation of SHC by:

(1) Promoting employee understanding,

(2) Integrating SHC into relevant aspects of Service planning and operations, and

(3) Ensuring a commitment to its implementation.

1.5 What terms do you need to know to understand SHC?

A. Adaptive management. A decision process that promotes flexible decision making that can be adjusted in the face of uncertainties as outcomes from management actions and other events become better understood (see 522 DM 1, Adaptive Management Implementation Policy).

B. Assumption-Driven Research. Testing and evaluating hypotheses to reduce uncertainty.

C. Biological Planning. The systematic application of scientific knowledge for developing strategies to conserve specific features of biological diversity.

D. Conservation Delivery. Implementing management actions with the goal of effectively and efficiently affecting target features identified in biological planning.

E. Conservation Design. Combining geospatial data, biological planning results, and socio-economic information into formats and decision support tools that help managers decide which conservation actions to use and where to apply them.

F. Decision Support Tools. Maps, databases, modeling results, and other products that aid decision making by providing context and data that help address a specific problem.

G. Geospatial. Relating to data, services, databases, or other items that are geographically referenced so they can be linked to a location on the earth (sometimes abbreviated as “spatial”).

H. Landscape. An area encompassing an interacting mosaic of ecosystems and human systems characterized by a set of common management concerns. The landscape is not defined by the size of the area, but rather by the interacting elements that are relevant and meaningful in a management context. The term “landscape” does not exclude areas described in terms of aquatic conditions, such as watersheds, which may represent the appropriate landscape scale (see 600 DM 6, Implementing Mitigation at the Landscape Scale).

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I. Landscape-Scale Approach (some Departmental policies use the synonymous term “Landscape-Level Approach”). A structured and analytical method that informs resource management decisions at multiple spatial scales, typically when diverse stakeholders seek multiple social, environmental, and economic goals. (See 604 DM 1, Implementing Landscape-Level Approaches to Resource Management.)

J. Limiting Factor. Something that constrains the growth of a population toward objective levels.

K. Outcome-Based Monitoring. Assessing the effects of management actions on habitats and species to make inferences that have a bearing on future management decisions.

L. Population Objectives. The desired status of species’ populations at a meaningful ecological or geographical scale. We express objectives as abundance, trend, distribution, vital rates, or by using other measurable indices of population status based on the best available biological information. We use these objectives to assess how well the management actions are achieving the desired outcomes.

POLICY

1.6 What is SHC, and what is the overall policy?

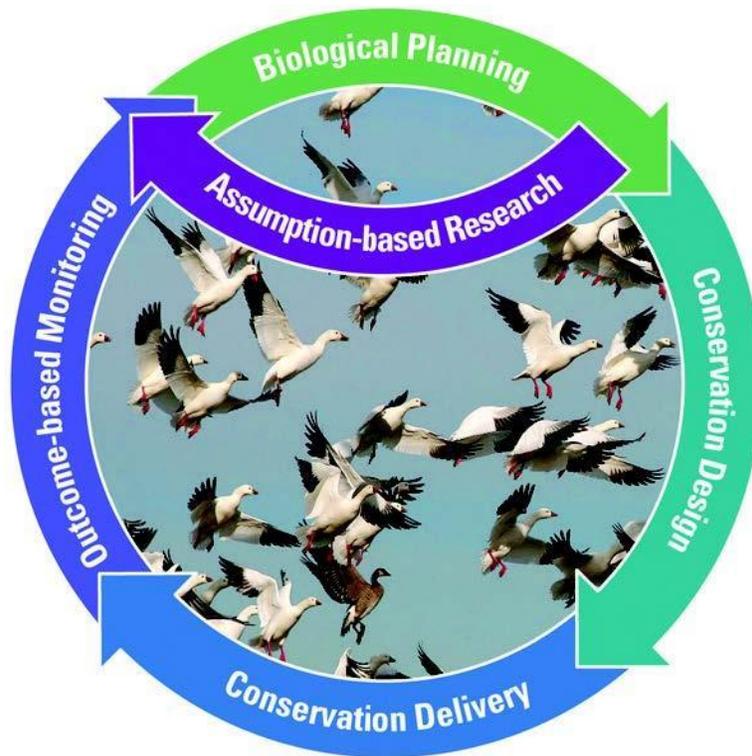
A. As described in 522 DM 1, the Service will use adaptive management to manage lands and resources.

B. As described in 604 DM 1, the Service will use SHC, when appropriate, to achieve landscape goals at multiple spatial and temporal scales.

C. SHC is an adaptive management framework the Service has adopted for making management decisions about where and how to deliver habitat conservation effectively and efficiently to achieve specific biological outcomes. It is an iterative process that requires us to set explicit objectives, make strategic decisions about our actions, document and test assumptions, monitor outcomes, and continually reassess and improve our approaches—all critical steps in dealing with a range of landscape-scale resource issues. (See Figure 1-1.)

D. Service employees use SHC to plan, implement, monitor, evaluate, and ultimately improve our conservation actions while working across programs and with partners.

Figure 1-1: The SHC Process



1.7 Why is the Service taking an SHC approach?

A. We adopted a strategic conservation approach to effectively address fish and wildlife management challenges of the 21st Century, which include habitat degradation and loss, encroaching development, climate change, and invasive species, which all contribute to a loss of biodiversity. SHC helps us to shift from site-specific or single-species actions to an integrated, landscape-scale approach—one that accounts for the complexity, dynamic, and interrelated nature of ecosystems.

B. This approach requires us to:

(1) Operate internally as an integrated organization and coordinate more effectively with partners across agencies and geographic boundaries;

(2) Set explicit objectives for target species or their associated habitats that represent the biological outcomes the Service, our partners, and conservation stakeholders desire; and

(3) Apply the best available scientific information, practices, and technology to address the conservation challenges we face at all scales.

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RESPONSIBILITIES

1.8 Who in the Service is responsible for the SHC policy and for carrying it out? See Table 1-1.

Table 1-1: Responsibilities for the SHC policy	
These employees...	Are responsible for...
A. The Director	<p>(1) Reviewing and approving national policy for the Service,</p> <p>(2) Coordinating with the State fish and wildlife agencies in a timely and effective manner, and</p> <p>(3) Communicating to employees the Service’s long-term commitment to SHC.</p>
B. Directorate members at Headquarters	<p>(1) Ensuring that their Headquarters staff comply with this policy;</p> <p>(2) Identifying and removing obstacles to promoting cross-programmatic implementation of SHC;</p> <p>(3) Communicating to employees about progress, successes, and the conservation value of using SHC; and</p> <p>(4) Reviewing and updating existing decision-making processes and management plans to integrate the principles and values in this policy.</p>
C. Regional Directors	<p>(1) Ensuring that their Regional staff comply with this policy;</p> <p>(2) Communicating to employees about progress, successes, and the conservation value of using SHC across their Regions;</p> <p>(3) Applying SHC to the conservation planning processes and activities for which they are responsible;</p> <p>(4) Coordinating with States, tribes, and other partners who are an integral part of successful implementation of SHC; and</p> <p>(5) Reviewing and updating existing decision-making processes and management plans to integrate the principles and values in this policy.</p>

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Table 1-1: Responsibilities for the SHC policy	
These employees...	Are responsible for...
D. Assistant Director – Science Applications	<p>(1) Coordinating with other Directorate members to facilitate a consistent approach to communication and decision-making processes across the Service,</p> <p>(2) Representing the Service on the Department’s Landscape-Level Working Group, and</p> <p>(3) Developing this policy and keeping it up-to-date.</p>
E. Project Leaders, Managers, and Supervisors	<p>(1) Ensuring that they and the employees for whom they are responsible become familiar with this policy, the Service’s SHC Handbook: A Guide to Implementing the Technical Elements of SHC (SHC Handbook), and other policy and guidance related to SHC;</p> <p>(2) Facilitating development of cross-programmatic work plans based on landscape-scale objectives;</p> <p>(3) Identifying resource and workforce skills and competencies required to complete the work;</p> <p>(4) Identifying their employees’ training needs related to SHC; and</p> <p>(5) Implementing the policy and guidance in this chapter and the SHC Handbook while planning for and performing their duties.</p>
F. Employees	<p>(1) Becoming familiar with this policy, the Service’s SHC Handbook, the <i>Technical Reference on Using Surrogate Species for Landscape Conservation</i>, and other SHC guidance documents or tools; and</p> <p>(2) Implementing the policy and guidance in this chapter and the SHC Handbook while planning for and performing their duties.</p>

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DEPUTY DIRECTOR

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