



CHAPTER 6

Review and Revision

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SNAPSHOT

Revising the 2015 Pennsylvania Wildlife Action Plan

- ✓ *Pennsylvania describes the process to review and revise the 2015 Pennsylvania Wildlife Action Plan by 09/30/2025.*

Introduction

The administrative structure and procedures established in the 2015 revision process provide the framework for interim revisions and the next comprehensive revision to be completed by September 30, 2025. Adapting State Wildlife Action Plan “best practices” (AFWA 2012), we established processes that are transparent and repeatable, and an administrative structure to guide revision and implementation. The 2015 Pennsylvania Wildlife Action Plan (Plan) is the first application of these processes and we will evaluate their effectiveness, using an adaptive management approach. Any revision of the 2015 Plan, including comprehensive revision, will be led by the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) and Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC).

Revision process

Pennsylvania recognizes the long-term commitment required to recover and protect the Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) identified in this Plan. To provide current understanding of the complex issues in this Plan, and to comply with *Required Element 6*, we intend to comprehensively revise this Plan within the requisite 10-year period. When doing so, where relevant and feasible, we will follow “best practices” outlined in AFWA (2012) ([Appendix 6.1](#)). The general timeline for the next anticipated comprehensive review and revision will begin in 2020 (Table 6.1). For other formal modifications to the Plan such as “major” or “minor” revisions, where reasonable and relevant, we will similarly apply “best practices” ([Appendix 6.1](#)).

We will work with current committee members (i.e., Steering, Advisory and Technical Committees) to evaluate the process and administrative structure used to develop this Plan ([Appendix 6.2, Exhibits 1-3](#)) and refine as needed. Pending such adjustments, we anticipate that a similar administrative structure (Chapter 7, Partners) would be used for the next comprehensive revision. Beyond the administrative structure for this Plan, we established technical processes that will support the next comprehensive revision. This is especially relevant for selecting and prioritizing Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN), for which the processes are more fully described in Chapter 1, Species. These processes were novel for this Plan and time-intensive to develop, but provide transparent and repeatable approaches for revision.

We anticipate over the next 10 years there will be increasing precision and accuracy in state-level and regional habitat maps. Notably, within the past 10 years, during implementation of the 2005 Wildlife



Action Plan, great advances in regional maps have been achieved. This is especially evident considering no regionally consistent aquatic (Olivero and Anderson 2008) and terrestrial (Ferree and Anderson 2011) habitat-classification maps were available when the 2005 Plan was completed. When revising the 2015 Plan we will use the most relevant classification system available to provide the best information for Pennsylvania's species and consistency with regional evaluations.

The scope and number of threats to Pennsylvania's species and habitats are of increasing concern. Working with our conservation partners, we will continue to assess these resource concerns and compile information to allow a thorough evaluation at the next comprehensive revision. When not encompassed by a State Wildlife Action Plan, the USFWS may determine a resource concern to represent an "emerging issue." This declaration allows states to use State & Tribal Wildlife Grant funds to address the problem. States must then more fully discuss that resource concern as part of next comprehensive revision. In Pennsylvania, white nose syndrome (WNS) was not a resource concern in 2005, but later posed a significant risk to Pennsylvania's cave bats and was thus identified as an emerging issue.

As expressed in Chapter 8, Public Participation, we intend to develop a communication strategy for the 2015 Plan, and this strategy will provide guidance for communicating with the public and partners in the revision process.

Best Practices for State Wildlife Action Plans

Following nearly seven years of implementation, and approaching the required comprehensive revision of their State Wildlife Action Plans, many states expressed interest in understanding successes (and failures) of activities addressing the *Eight Required Elements*. To assist states, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) Teaming With Wildlife committee (TWW), organized a national committee of State Wildlife Action Plan coordinators (i.e., the State Wildlife Action Plan Best Practices Working Group) to develop a voluntary guide for revision of State Wildlife Action Plans (AFWA 2012). Although each State Wildlife Action Plan reflects the concerns and needs of its respective state, as a national program, greater coordination and consistency among the plans would enhance measurement of success for the species and foster collaboration among states (Carter Smith, Foreword *in* AFWA 2012). Throughout revision of the 2005 Plan, these "best practices" guided development of crucial components. Principally, these best practices contributed to a transparent process, application of scientific methods and models, and encouraged use of standard classification systems and taxonomy (AFWA 2012). As the *Eight Required Elements* are discussed throughout this Plan, we have highlighted where a "best practice" has been adopted. If these best practices are updated prior to 2025, we will implement the practices that are feasible for Pennsylvania's Wildlife Action Plan.

Ongoing Evaluation and Emerging Issues

Working with established committees, especially the Steering Committee and Advisory Committee, implementation progress will be assessed annually, unless need arises for more frequent assessments. As observed from 2005 to 2015, emerging issues such as energy development (e.g., wind, natural gas), climate change, and diseases (e.g., WNS) directly influenced Pennsylvania's SGCN and their habitats.



With dynamic environmental events, new concerns are likely to occur during the next 10 years and guidance from the Steering, Advisory, Technical Committees, and public will be essential for determining how the plan can be implemented to address these new needs. We will inform the USFWS Region V office, and the Advisory Committee on which they serve, of emerging issues. We will address new resource concerns through either:

- A letter to the USFWS Region V office identifying the emerging issue and requesting use of State & Tribal Wildlife Grant funds for projects that address the concern. For these resource concerns, Pennsylvania will more thoroughly discuss the topic in the next comprehensive revision.
- A minor or major amendment to the Plan.

Summary

The 2015 Pennsylvania Wildlife Action Plan is a substantial initiative for recovering and securing the longevity of Pennsylvania's SGCN and their habitats. We fully recognize that success of the Plan requires long-term dedication, and our commitment to revise this 2015 Plan highlights our assurances to continue this work well into the future.

Table 6.1. Anticipated timeline for revising the 2015 Pennsylvania Wildlife Action Plan.

Year	Activity
2015-2023	Annual evaluation of implementation progress.
2020	PGC and PFBC Steering, Advisory, and Technical Committees convene to discuss needs for the 2025 SWAP Revision. Revision needs, including updates to species assessments, SGCN selection and prioritization processes, and implementation progress are fully developed and reviewed by these committees.
2021	PGC and PFBC notify USFWS Region V of intent to comprehensively revise the 2015 Pennsylvania Wildlife Action Plan. Initiate compilation of species and habitat data; conduct assessments and SGCN prioritization; 2015 plan accomplishments; Begin semi-annual meetings of Steering and Advisory Committees.
2022	Continue assessments and SGCN prioritization; habitat evaluations; summary of 2015 plan accomplishments. Begin quarterly meetings of Steering and Advisory Committees.
2023	Begin drafting revised plan.
2024	Complete draft plan; provide to Steering Committee, Advisory Committee for review. Revise and provide for public review (minimum 30 days).
2025	Finalize plan based on public comments. Submit 2025 Pennsylvania Wildlife Action Plan by no later than September 30, 2025.



Appendix 6.1

Exhibit 1. Best Practices guidance for revising State Wildlife Action Plans. Source: AFWA (2012).

Guidance	Comprehensive Review	Major Revision	Minor Revision
Deadline for Revision	Date specified in last approved SWAP; or if no date specified, October 1, 2015 or Ten (10) years from date of last approved comprehensive review, whichever comes first.	No deadline: a state may choose to do a major revision at any time. The major revision does not restart the 10-year clock, nor change the comprehensive review date.	No deadline: a state may choose to do a minor revision at any time. The minor revision does not restart the 10-year clock, nor change the comprehensive review date.
USFWS Notification Requirements <i>“Early and often” should be the guiding principle – assume a need or desire to communicate with revision partners, even if not required by the 2007 Guidance.</i>	State agency director notifies USFWS Regional Office (RO) Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration (WSFR) Coordinator by letter of intent to initiate the Comprehensive Review. Best Practice: State’s letter outlines that the entire plan will be reviewed; specific elements that will likely change (if known); the timeframe for completing the review; public review and response to comments, and companion documents delivery Best Practice: Prior to the intent-to-revise notification to USFWS, create a project management chart (e.g., Gantt chart) to identify milestones, timelines, resources needed, deliverables, and people/roles. Best Practice: Determine which USFWS Region will be responsible for the review— if there is a conflict of interest (e.g., state requesting coordination is on the Review Team) another region will review. All plans for revision should be vetted with both the Region that will oversee the grants after the SWAP is approved and the Region that will conduct the review.	State agency director notifies USFWS RO WSFR Coordinator by letter of intent to make major revisions. Best Practice: State’s letter outlines specific elements that it anticipates revising, establishes the timeframe for completing and delivering the Major Revision, including all companion documentation delivery Best Practice: Prior to the intent-to revise notification to USFWS, create a project management chart (e.g., Gantt chart) to identify milestones, timelines, resources needed, deliverables, and people/roles.	State agency director notifies USFWS RO WSFR Coordinator by letter of intent to make minor revisions. Best Practice: State’s letter includes what it intends to revise, and a statement that supports why the change is considered a minor revision.



Guidance	Comprehensive Review	Major Revision	Minor Revision
Is a meeting or teleconference with USFWS RO required prior to state action?	<p>YES</p> <p>Best Practice: Schedule a meeting in person or via teleconference, before the review process is initiated, with the WSFR RO contact. During this meeting: verify the actions, timeline for actions by all parties; document this meeting with written minutes reviewed by meeting participants.</p>	<p>NO</p> <p>Best Practice: Following USFWS RO acknowledgment of intent to revise, communicate with RRT members throughout process, and prior to SWAP and companion document delivery; in each communication, verify the timeline for actions by all parties; document teleconference(s) and meeting(s) with written minutes reviewed by meeting participants.</p>	<p>NO</p> <p>Best Practice: Following notification letter, a teleconference with USFWS RO and possibly the RRT is valuable to keep all parties apprised of changes; document this call with written minutes reviewed by all participants in meeting.</p>
<p>Road Map Required?</p> <p><i>The Road Map outlines the location of the Eight Required Elements in the SWAP.</i></p>	<p>YES</p> <p>Best Practice: Ensure that the Eight Elements are easily recognized within the table of contents.</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>Best Practice: Ensure that the Eight Elements are easily recognized within the table of contents.</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>Best Practice: Ensure that the Eight Elements are easily recognized within the table of contents.</p>
<p>Must a state demonstrate the entire SWAP was reviewed?</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>Best Practice: Provide evidence that the entire plan was assessed by the agency, stakeholders, and the public, and that the decision not to change certain sections was based on a consensus that there was no need for a change (i.e., that these sections were considered current and sufficiently relevant to the revised sections).</p>	<p>NO</p>	<p>NO</p>
<p>Summary of Changes required?</p> <p><i>Different from the Road Map, the Summary of Changes identifies where all significant changes have been made</i></p>	<p>YES</p> <p>Include a tabular summary of any significant changes made as a result of the comprehensive review, and where those changes can be found in the documents.</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>Include a tabular summary of any significant changes made as a result of the major revision, and where those changes can be found in the documents.</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>Include a tabular summary of any changes made as a result of the minor revision, and where those changes can be found in the documents.</p>



Guidance	Comprehensive Review	Major Revision	Minor Revision
If no changes are made to the SWAP or any Element:	Document and explain why no changes were necessary after review, and describe the process used to make that determination. Provide documentation that the public reviewed the unchanged sections as well.	No explanation of unchanged parts of SWAP is required.	No explanation of unchanged parts of SWAP is required.
Must a state post the new SWAP, summary of changes, and Road Map online?	<p>NO—not required.</p> <p>Best Practice: Although posting online is not required, the Internet is the first place many people search for information. Post SWAP, Road Map, and Summary of Changes online in a searchable format, related to the way your constituents would use the document. Additionally, post the purpose of the SWAP, contacts for more information, and regular updates to mark progress.</p>	<p>NO—not required</p> <p>Best Practice: Although not required to post online, the Internet is the first place many people search for information. Post SWAP, Road Map, and Summary of Changes online in a searchable format, related to the way your constituents would use the document. Additionally, post the purpose of the SWAP, contacts for more information, and regular updates to mark progress.</p>	<p>NO—not required</p> <p>Best Practice: Although not required to post online, the Internet is the first place many people search for information. Post SWAP, Road Map, and Summary of Changes online in a searchable format, related to the way your constituents would use the document. Additionally, post the purpose of the SWAP, contacts for more information, and regular updates to mark progress.</p>
Is a Public Review Required?	<p>YES (Elements 7 & 8)</p> <p>Note: A public review of the entire SWAP is required, including those sections not changed.</p>	<p>YES (Elements 7 & 8)</p> <p>Note: A public review is only required for the SWAP content that was changed.</p>	<p>NO</p> <p>A public review process is not required.</p>



Appendix 6.2

Exhibit 1.

Charter for the 2015 Pennsylvania Wildlife Action Plan Steering Committee.

STEERING COMMITTEE CHARTER

Revising the Pennsylvania Wildlife Action Plan (2015)

Roles and Responsibilities

Overview

The Steering Committee will provide guidance on major activities associated with revising the 2005 Plan and will be responsible for ensuring timely completion of tasks. The Steering Committee will be responsible for approving the final document. Other staff may be added to this committee, but such additions should be minimized.

Background

In September 2005, the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) and Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission (PFBC) submitted the first Pennsylvania Plan. With a Wildlife Action Plan submitted by each state and U.S. Territories, this congressionally mandated document maintained Pennsylvania's eligibility to receive State & Tribal Wildlife Grants funding. After rigorous regional and national review, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) approved the 2005 Plan in 2006.

To maintain eligibility for ongoing State & Tribal Wildlife Grants funds, Congress also required regular updates of each State Wildlife Action Plan by each state/territory, at an interval not to exceed 10 years. The next version of the Pennsylvania Wildlife Action Plan is due to the USFWS no later than 30 September, 2015.

Purpose

This *Pennsylvania Wildlife Action Plan Revision Steering Committee* (hereafter, Steering Committee) has been convened to guide and track the revision process and review and approve content for the revised document, to be presented to the Executive Directors for final approval.



Composition & Structure

The Plan is a collaborative document between the PGC and PFBC. As such, similar representatives from each agency have been identified for this Steering Committee. The revision will occur over several years and staff may change within this time. To ensure continuity of process, representatives from the following positions should serve on this Steering Committee through 30 September 2015:

<i>Game Commission</i>	<i>Fish and Boat Commission</i>
Executive Director	Executive Director
Director, Wildlife Management Bureau	Director, Fisheries Bureau
Information and Education Specialist	Chief, Division of Environmental Services
Chief, Wildlife Diversity Division	Chief, Natural Diversity Section
Chief, Habitat Planning and Development Division	Chief, Division of Fish Management
Wildlife Action Plan Coordinator	Wildlife Action Plan Coordinator

Roles

All parties have equal voices on the Steering Committee, following chain-of-command within each agency. Agency Executive Directors will provide general oversight of the Steering Committee and serve as final arbiters in unlikely cases when a mutually agreed upon decision cannot otherwise be made. Bureau directors will make final decisions in most cases, or at their discretion, may choose to consult the Executive Director. Division and Section Chiefs will more directly guide the revision process through coordination with the State Wildlife Action Plan Coordinators. State Wildlife Action Plan Coordinators will be responsible for coordinating and completing tasks to sufficiently address all congressionally required elements, including organizing Steering Committee meetings and correspondence.

Process

State Wildlife Action Plan Coordinators will compile and disseminate review documents/suggestions for Steering Committee consideration during meetings and via email.

Meetings: State Wildlife Action Plan Coordinators (Coordinators) will update Steering Committee members quarterly (January, April, July, October), as requested, or at major milestones. Additional meetings may be called when key input and/or decisions are needed by the Steering Committee. Teleconferencing and WebEx technologies will be employed to the greatest extent possible to minimize time and expense for participants. The Coordinators will email draft meeting minutes to the Steering Committee for review and comment prior to finalization.

Quorum: Every effort will be made to establish meeting dates that are suitable for all Steering Committee members. Nevertheless, busy schedules may preclude the opportunity for all parties to attend a specific meeting. Therefore, to ensure timely completion of tasks, yet also provide sufficient guidance, the *State Wildlife Action Plan Coordinators, plus two Steering Committee*



members from each agency, will constitute a quorum for decision-making. Decisions may be made during regularly scheduled meetings or via email. The coordinators will conduct daily business according to the mutually agreed upon revision process and with reasonable discretion.

Decision-making: The Steering Committee will work collaboratively to establish and implement a WAP revision process and develop a product that is amenable to both agencies and in the best interest of Commonwealth's citizens. All parties are striving to produce the best possible document, yet not all parties will be satisfied in all cases. In the unlikely event of a stalemate, agency executive directors will be presented with options for the final decision.

Communications: Email will serve as the primary format for Steering Committee communications with draft materials posted on the Wildlife Action Plan SharePoint Site or current information-sharing platform.



Exhibit 2.

Charter for the 2015 Pennsylvania Wildlife Action Plan Advisory Committee.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE CHARTER

Pennsylvania Wildlife Action Plan Revision Process (2015)

Roles and Responsibilities

Overview

The Advisory Committee (Committee) will provide technical guidance and support to the Plan revision process.

Composition

This Committee is composed of key conservation partners (e.g., state & federal agencies, non-governmental organizations) from organizations having national and statewide coverage, as well as a broad mission encompassing multiple species and/ or that is habitat focused.

Roles and Responsibilities

This Committee will provide guidance and diverse perspectives on critical issues and concerns of the Plan. Committee participants may be asked to develop new materials, provide existing materials, and gather information or other necessary tasks, to assist with the revision process.

Technical and *ad hoc* Committee Roles and Responsibilities

With their role in reviewing species for inclusion in the Plan, the PA Biological Survey (PABS) has the purpose "*to increase the knowledge of and foster the perpetuation of the natural biological diversity of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.*" Members of this organization include: scientists from throughout the state, representatives of state and federal agencies concerned with natural resource management, representatives of Pennsylvania's major natural history museums and scientific institutions, and interested individuals ([PABS 2015](#)).

Background

In September 2005, the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) and Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission (PFBC) submitted the first Plan. With a Plan submitted by each state and U.S. Territory, this congressionally mandated document maintained the eligibility of Pennsylvania for receipt of State & Tribal Wildlife Grants funding. After rigorous regional and national review, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) approved the Pennsylvania Plan in 2006.

To maintain eligibility for ongoing State & Tribal Wildlife Grants, Congress also required regular updates of the Plan by each state/territory, at an interval not to exceed 10 years. The next version of the Pennsylvania Plan is due to the USFWS no later than 30 September, 2015. Considering the extensive volume and scope of this document, the PGC and PFBC have initiated the process for revising the 2005 Plan.



As part of this revision process, the PGC and PFBC are requesting advice and recommendations from partners who were involved in the development of the 2005 Plan, or who may have a critical role in the implementation of the current plan, or the revised plan. In addition, consultation with federal, state and tribal agencies, as well as partners and the public, are required as part of the Plan revision process (Elements 7 & 8). Therefore, this Committee can further assist in addressing this requirement.

For efficiency and effectiveness, we identified the following Roles and Responsibilities as well as Operational Guidance for participants of this Committee. We genuinely sought candid and constructive advice in the revision of the 2005 Plan.

1. *Advisory*

- a. This Committee will function in an advisory role only.
- b. PGC and PFBC reserve the right to use, modify or to limit use of any recommendations or materials provided by the Committee.

2. *Participation*

- a. Participation in the Committee is voluntary and members should not feel obligated to participate.
- b. To maintain a manageable committee size, participation is by invitation.
 - i. Additional members may be recommended, but their participation must be approved by both PFBC and PGC.
 - ii. Committee members may consult with other partners who may not be part of the Committee to gather pertinent information.
- c. PGC and PFBC recognize that participants have obligations to their agency or organization. We will strive to minimize the time and inconvenience of participants.
- d. Participation in this Committee will not provide any advantage in securing current or future funding from State Wildlife Grants or other sources, provided by either the PGC or PFBC.
- e. Participants will provide all professional courtesy to other members (see details in Operational Guidance below).

3. *Meetings*

The PGC and PFBC recognize that increasing travel expenses are impinging upon the budgets of state, federal and non-governmental organizations. Therefore:

- a. In-person meetings will be kept to a minimum (estimated 2 per year).
- b. Conferencing and WebEx will be used to foster communication between in-person meetings.
- c. If technical teams/subcommittees are formed, the leaders of these groups will be responsible for coordinating technical team meetings and conference calls. PFBC and PGC will assist in facilitating these meetings/calls.



4. *Travel Expenses*

- a. Participants will be responsible for their own travel expenses, unless funding is available to offset travel costs.

5. *Tasks*

- a. Committee participants may be asked to develop new materials, provide existing materials, and gather information or other necessary tasks, to assist with the revision process.
- b. Copyrighted or restricted material must be acknowledged and thoroughly referenced.
- c. Due dates for tasks will be developed through mutual consent by the participants.

6. *Acknowledgment*

- a. The conservation and protection of Pennsylvania's natural resources is a collaborative effort. PGC and PFBC are truly appreciative of the efforts and support from partners.
- b. All participants will be gratefully acknowledged in the 2015 Plan.



Exhibit 3.

Operational Guidance for the 2015 Pennsylvania Wildlife Action Plan Advisory Committee.

Operational Guidance Advisory Committee

Overview

This is a statewide effort with national significance and we recognize that participating members of this Committee will represent the interests of their respective agencies and organizations. We also respect that this project is *in addition to* each member's standard duties and responsibilities. The following operational guidance provides a foundation for the responsibilities of participants to ensure timely completion of this Plan.

Collegiality

This project has a common goal (i.e., a completed, revised plan) and provides an opportunity to build camaraderie.

- Have fun!
- Make new acquaintances and build upon existing relationships.
- Share your knowledge and learn from others.

Timelines

Established timelines are to ensure timely completion of the project.

- Please abide by timelines for meetings, draft documents; conference calls, and related activities
- When participating (e.g., verbal or written ideas), please be mindful of time constraints. If a topic requires further discussion, propose an alternative venue.

Mutual Respect & Trust

A strength of this Committee is the diverse knowledge and experience of its members. Committee products will be based upon our collective contributions. Scientific discourse can be productive (and occasionally messy), so keep in mind the following guidance for participation:

- Respect all contributions and ideas.
- Critiques should be directed at the ideas not the person. The tone of such critiques should be constructive and not degrading, condescending, or inflammatory.
- Minimize non-subject discussions. Keep to the topic.
- Be considerate of distractions and avoid speaking while others are speaking – wait until you are called upon or there is an appropriate time for providing your comment.
- Minimize “side bar” conversations.
- Encourage participation by all members.
- Avoid hidden agendas. Be open about potential conflicts of interests.



- Place cell phones on “manner mode” and if receiving a call, minimize disruption to the group.

Shared Roles & Responsibilities

The complexity and requirements of this project require shared roles and responsibilities. Participants will strive to share the tasks and responsibilities by:

- Volunteering for tasks, especially those for which they have special expertise or interests.
- Being proactive in providing information that can assist with filling data gaps and advancing ideas.
- Being responsible for keeping current on the status of the project, even if they are unable to participate in all meetings, conference calls, or similar discussions.

Decision-Making

It is unlikely we will all fully agree on all aspects of the various products. Further, as Advisory Committee members, information provided represents *recommendations* to the Commissions. The PGC and PFBC are responsible for the final Wildlife Action Plan. Therefore, the following guidance is provided for decision-making:

- Members present during specific meetings or conference calls are encouraged to participate fully in the decision-making process.
- Adapt a “will live with” decision-making format.
- Given the short project timelines, not all members will be present at each meeting or conference call. As decisions are made or conclusions reached, those not in attendance agree to move forward as a team and not retrace discussions or decisions causing unnecessary backtracks for the team as a whole.
- Be open-minded and creative. As differences in viewpoints arise, strive to actively listen to the other person’s views and rationale.
- Decisions not receiving “will live with” support will be provided to the PFBC and PGC for resolution. Explanations will be provided for any final decision.

Potential members of the Advisory Committee

Criteria for members of the Committee

- National Coverage.
- Statewide Coverage.
- Broad mission; multiple species and habitat focus.