

Chapter One

A Need for Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation

Background

The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation

Wildlife conservation frameworks in the United States and Canada share several distinct features and were developed as a result of the unique circumstances of the establishment of these nations. Collectively these frameworks are referred to as the *North American Model of Wildlife Conservation* (hereafter referred to as the Model). The democratic principles that shaped the U.S. also extended to the realm of wildlife ownership and management as the European notion of a landowner also owning the wildlife inhabiting the land was discarded in favor of a belief that wildlife are held in the public trust. The history, foundational principles, challenges to, and future of the Model are thoughtfully presented in a technical review developed by The Wildlife Society and the Boone and Crockett Club (Organ et al. 2012). The Model is founded upon seven principles, or pillars (see Box 1.1). The underlying foundation of the Model is the Public Trust Doctrine.

The Public Trust Doctrine

The Public Trust Doctrine asserts the idea that certain resources, including wildlife, are owned by no one and are held in trust by the government for the benefit of present and future generations. This doctrine is at the root of this Plan. The Public Trust Doctrine stems from early Greek and Roman law, was reaffirmed by the English Magna Carta in 1215, and later redefined in English common law in 1641, which was subsequently applied to the 13 British Colonies (Batcheller et al. 2010). After U.S. independence, the Doctrine was first upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court in “*Martin v. Waddell*,” an 1842 decision that declared that the public held a common right to certain resources. More recent case law has upheld and expanded the reach of the Doctrine. For a review of the Public Trust Doctrine as it relates to wildlife conservation and management, see Batcheller et al. (2010).

In the U.S., fish and wildlife management responsibility is shared by the Federal government and State, Tribal, and Territorial governments. Through the Public Trust Doctrine, states are trustees of wildlife except in instances where the Constitution provided for federal oversight.

Traditional Funding Model for Wildlife Conservation in the U.S.

Since the development of modern-day wildlife management in the 1930s, the funding model for wildlife conservation in the U.S. has been heavily reliant upon sportsmen and women. This relationship is described by Organ et al. (2012):

“From the earliest days of active management and enforcement by nascent state fish and wildlife agencies, hunters, anglers, and trappers have funded restoration and conservation initiatives. License and permit fees, a motor boat fuels tax, and excise taxes on hunting, shooting sports, and angling products provide dedicated funding for habitat conservation, harvest management, research, restoration, and monitoring initiatives by state agencies. The excise tax programs have permanent, indefinite appropriation status, which means that the revenues are automatically distributed to the states each year and not subject to congressional whim.”

Box 1.1

Pillars of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation

- 1. Wildlife Resources are a Public Trust*
- 2. Markets for game are eliminated*
- 3. Allocation of wildlife is by law*
- 4. Wildlife can be killed only for a legitimate purpose*
- 5. Wildlife is considered an international resource*
- 6. Science is the proper tool to discharge wildlife policy*
- 7. Democracy of hunting is standard*

Current and Future Wildlife Management: New Challenges, Threats, and Expectations

This funding model served wildlife conservation well for many decades and led to the successful restoration of many species of wildlife as well as the habitats upon which they depend. However, as participation in hunting and angling declines have been observed over the long term, it has become increasingly clear that the reliance upon sportsmen and women for

conservation of all wildlife is insufficient and unsustainable. Furthermore, as all wildlife, not just game and sportfish species, are held in the public trust, the fairness of the funding system has been questioned.

Sustainable Funding and Teaming With Wildlife

Since the 1980s, state fish and wildlife agencies have struggled to meet an increasing number of constituent demands while facing larger and more complex threats to the natural world, while relying on a funding model which was developed in large part to restore populations of sportfish and game. As the scientific fields of Wildlife and Fisheries Management, Conservation Biology, Landscape Ecology, Global Change Biology and Human Dimensions of Wildlife Conservation advanced and matured, the complexity of the conservation issues faced by State Fish and Wildlife Agencies was increasingly recognized. The need for management attention to nongame species and to functioning ecosystems became increasingly apparent. In the 1990s, in response to these increased challenges, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) initiated the Teaming With Wildlife (TWW) coalition on behalf of State Fish and Wildlife Agencies. This coalition sought, and still seeks, sustainable, dedicated funding for fish and wildlife conservation at the national level. In the 1990s, the coalition focused on the creation of an excise tax on birding, hiking, camping, and other recreational equipment, one that would mirror and build from the success of long established excise taxes for hunting, shooting sports, and angling equipment. However, some members of the outdoor recreation industry opposed the effort and it failed to gain support in Congress.

In 1996, the TWW coalition made a second large-scale attempt to find dedicated funding for all wildlife, this time based on the use of offshore oil and gas lease funds. The Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA) would have generated \$350 million annually for wildlife conservation nationwide; approximately \$4.5 million would have been Iowa's share. In 2001, CARA was passed in the House and had widespread support in the Senate. Ultimately, however, the measure failed. Instead, a vastly smaller, one-time appropriation for state wildlife diversity programs was enacted, called the Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program (WCRP). Beginning in 2002, a similar program was enacted, called State and Tribal Wildlife Grants, which has received annual appropriations ever since.

State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program (SWG)

Appropriations titled *State and Tribal Wildlife Grants (SWG)* have been passed annually since then, though the program is subject to yearly Congressional debate. The program's annual allocations have averaged approximately \$58.6 million. These grants, managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, have required non-federal matching funds that vary from 25% to 50% depending on the year and type of program. Iowa DNR has received approximately \$10 million in WCRP and SWG funds from 2001-2014, with an average annual appropriation of ~\$720,000. These funds have been used to implement this Plan through increased research, habitat

protection, and management for Species of Greatest Conservation Need designated in the Plan. Iowa must match the SWG income with non-federal funds and many partners have worked together to leverage the federal funds in order to most effectively conserve the species and habitats that were identified as priorities within this Plan.

Other Funding Initiatives

In an effort to diversify and strengthen the funding needed to carry out wildlife conservation, States have attempted to direct funding to wildlife conservation from a variety of sources, such as lottery funds, general fund appropriations, special license plates, and tax checkoffs. A few state fish and wildlife agencies, including Minnesota, Missouri and Arkansas, have obtained broad-based funding to augment their traditional funding sources. In 2010, Iowa voters approved the creation of the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund, to be funded through a portion of the next sales tax increase. However, in 2015, Iowa still awaits the sales tax increase necessary to supply the Trust Fund with money.

In Iowa other efforts to diversify funding sources have been successful, but remain at levels vastly outmatched by the need. For example, Iowa's Chickadee Check-off program currently generates approximately \$130,000 annually. The Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) Natural Resource License Plate funds have also provided a boost to IDNR's ability to conserve a diverse array of wildlife, providing roughly \$500,000/year. When compared to roughly \$30 million generated by hunters and anglers, these funding sources are relatively small. When this Plan was initially developed in 2005, it was estimated (see Table 10.1) that the annual shortfall in funds needed for implementation was \$39,375,000. Thus, despite several successful efforts to increase funds dedicated to wildlife conservation, the existing funding remains far short of the need.

State Wildlife Action Plans

In 2003, as a requirement to maintain eligibility for State Wildlife Grant funds, all states, territories and tribes which received SWG appropriations were required by Congress to develop Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies, now generally referred to as State Wildlife Action Plans (SWAPs). All 50 States and five U.S. territories developed a State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) in 2005.

State Wildlife Action Plans outline the steps that are needed to conserve wildlife and habitat before they become too rare or costly to restore. Taken as a whole, these proactive plans present a national action agenda for preventing wildlife from becoming endangered.

State Wildlife Action Plans conserve wildlife and natural places. They assess the health of each state's wildlife and habitats, identify the problems they face, and outline the actions that are

needed to conserve them over the long term. To learn more about State Wildlife Action Plans and view links to other states' plans, please visit: www.teaming.com

The Eight Required Elements of a State Wildlife Action Plan

As a condition of receiving SWG funds, Congress mandated that state fish and wildlife agencies develop a *Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan* (State Wildlife Action Plan) by October 1, 2005, and review and revise the plan every 10 years thereafter. Congress directed that the plans must identify and be focused on the species in greatest need of conservation yet address the full array of wildlife and wildlife-related issues. Congress identified eight required elements to be addressed in each State's Plan:

1. Information on the distribution and abundance of wildlife, including low and declining populations as each State Fish and Wildlife agency [IDNR] deems to be appropriate, that are indicative of the diversity and health of wildlife of the State. Low and declining populations of fish and wildlife are defined in the Plan as Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN).
2. Locations and relative conditions of key habitats and community types essential to conservation of SGCN.
3. Descriptions of problems which may adversely affect SGCN or their habitats and priority research and survey efforts needed to identify factors that may assist in restoration and improved conservation of SGCN and their habitats.
4. Descriptions of conservation actions necessary to conserve SGCN and their habitats and establish priorities for implementing such actions.
5. Provisions for periodic monitoring of SGCN and their habitats, for monitoring the effectiveness of conservation actions, and for adapting these conservation actions as appropriate to respond to new information or changing conditions.
6. Each State's provisions to review its Strategy [Plan] at intervals not to exceed ten years.
7. Each State's provisions for coordination during the development, implementation, review, and revision of its Strategy [Plan] with Federal, State, and local agencies and Indian Tribes that manage significant areas of land water within the State, or administer programs that significantly affect the conservation of SGCN or their habitats.
8. Each State's provisions to provide the necessary public participation in the development, revision, and implementation of its Strategy [Plan].

The Plan must utilize the best available knowledge on the distribution and abundance of wildlife, historical documentation and other references to identify Iowa's wildlife conservation

needs. The Plan must address the needs of all wildlife, but focus primarily on SGCN and their habitats as determined by IDNR.

Iowa's Wildlife Action Plan

Iowa's Plan was initially approved in 2006, and subsequently modified in 2012. This version represents the first comprehensive revision of Iowa's Plan.

Framework Outlined in Initial Plan

The Steering Committee which first developed Iowa's Plan made several decisions which have left a lasting imprint upon this first comprehensive revision.

1. The IWAP would be a wildlife plan; plants are not specifically addressed except as an integral component of wildlife habitat.
2. The IWAP would have a 25-year focus. Long-term continuity is needed to accomplish ambitious objectives, but achievements are needed to be accomplished in a time frame that can be appreciated by Plan supporters.
3. The IWAP would be strategic in nature. Operational plans to implement the visions and strategies would be crafted later to fit the unique missions and capabilities of conservation organizations and individuals interested in Plan Implementation.

To assure the Plan would involve a diversity of conservation viewpoints, representatives of 105 conservation, recreation, education and agricultural support organizations were invited to serve on a formal Advisory Group; 93 individuals representing 59 organizations agreed to participate ([Appendix 2-1](#)).

The Advisory Group met in Des Moines on July 17, 2004. The purpose of the meeting was to develop a vision for the IWAP and strategies for attaining that vision by the year 2030. The Advisory Group was updated on the planning process and the status of wildlife and their habitats in Iowa. The large group then broke into eight focus groups and developed vision elements and conservation actions. When condensed by the steering committee, these vision elements and conservation actions form the basis for the strategies and priorities outlined in Chapters 6-10.

One of the key factors identified during the process of determining the SGCN was the lack of current, credible information on the distribution and abundance of many nongame species. For this reason, the Multiple Species Inventory and Monitoring Program has been a signature aspect in the implementation of this Plan.

2012 Modification

In 2012, an update to certain portions of the Iowa Wildlife Action Plan was completed and approved. That modification was focused primarily on adding and removing several species from the list of SGCN, as well as editing the map of High Opportunity Areas for Collaborative Conservation in order to more fully represent the priorities of conservation entities within the state.

During the public comment period for the 2012 modification, comments were received from eight people (3 IDNR employees and 5 non-employees). To the extent that integration of these comments was feasible and within the scope of this modification, the comments were all integrated. Those who submitted comments that addressed broader issues of the scope, priorities, or format of the IWAP were informed that their comments had been compiled and would be addressed in the full review/revision of the IWAP.

2015 Comprehensive Revision Process

Persons representing much of the ecological and conservation expertise existing in the state were included in various stages of the revision process, either as members of committees or as consultants and reviewers of specific portions of the IWAP.

A variety of efforts were made to ensure that information about the Plan received statewide distribution to the public as well:

- A complete draft of the revised Plan was placed on the IDNR's web site with the email address for the Plan Coordinator, who received comments.
- As an alternative to downloading the draft Plan from the website, a CD-ROM containing the draft revised Plan was supplied to individuals upon request.
- Statewide news releases advertised completion of the Draft revised Plan, where it was available and how to comment.
- The public comment period for the draft IWAP revision was held from July ____ - ____, 2015. A total of ____ written comments were received and incorporated in whole or part into the final version of the Plan. (This will have to be filled in after the comment period closes.)

Iowa's Conservation Legacy

Iowa has a long and important role in the advancement of fish and wildlife conservation. Some of the most prominent figures in the nation's history of conservation have roots in Iowa:

- Iowa Congressman John Lacey brought us the Lacey Act, which was passed in 1900. This Act essentially brought the era of market hunting to a close. The Act prohibits interstate transport or export of illegally harvested species.
- Aldo Leopold, author of “Game Management” and “A Sand County Almanac” (among many other works) was a conservationist, philosopher, author, forester, hunter, and educator. Leopold, commonly viewed as the father of wildlife management, was born and raised in Burlington, Iowa. In addition to serving as the nation’s first Chair of Game Management (at UW-Madison), he helped found The Wilderness Society and The Wildlife Society.
- Jay N. “Ding” Darling, was a Pulitzer Prize-winning editorial cartoonist for the Des Moines Register. Darling was instrumental in the development of the Federal Duck Stamp Program and designed its first stamp. He was also involved in founding the National Wildlife Society.
- Paul Errington was a professor of Zoology and led the nation’s first Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit at Iowa State College (now Iowa State University).

Today, Iowans maintain a strong connection to wildlife, and many participate directly in wildlife-associated recreation. The 2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation reported that wildlife-related recreation (hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing) contributed \$1,033,723,000 to Iowa’s economy in 2011. Over 1.3 million Iowans age 16 and older participated in these activities in that year.

Moreover, regardless of their participation in wildlife-associated recreation, Iowans strongly favor conservation. In 2013, a non-partisan survey of Iowa’s voters found that 97% of respondents agree with the statement “We need to ensure that our children and grandchildren can enjoy Iowa’s land, water, wildlife, and natural beauty the same way we do” (Weigel and Metz, 2013).

Preserving all the species that reside in or migrate through the state and their habitats is important to maintaining the health of Iowa’s wildlife which contributes not only to the economy, but also to the aesthetic value of the state. Maintaining Iowa’s biological diversity will help this natural resource persist for many years into the future and continue to provide nature’s benefits that we enjoy through hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, and other outdoor recreational activities.

While a large number of individuals contributed in some manner to the IWAP, ultimate responsibility for its content lies with the Implementation Committee and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

References Cited in Chapter 1

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