

# STATE WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN | INTRODUCTION AND CONTACTS

*Conservation doesn't just happen. It requires resources and collaboration.*



Thank you for your interest and participation in Indiana's State Wildlife Action Plan. The future of Indiana's natural resources depends on you. Whether you are a researcher who provides information about species and habitats, a land manager who decides daily what actions to implement, a consumer of natural resources, or someone who simply likes to see our natural resources improve over time, you are vital to ensuring the future of our natural resources.

There are numerous ways to be involved, and Indiana's Action Plan is just one way to shape our state's fish and wildlife resources. Your feedback and interactions are invaluable and we appreciate the time you devoted to this significant effort.

Please visit [SWAP.dnr.IN.gov](http://SWAP.dnr.IN.gov) for more information about the Action Plan, including notes from past meetings and the entire Plan from 2005. This site is where you can find up-to-date information about the process and ways to get involved.

We would like to recognize the folks who have been critical to the revision of the State Wildlife Action Plan so far. The Core Team consists of staff within the Indiana Division of Fish and Wildlife. Taking actions to ensure the future of our state's fish and wildlife resources begins within the Division. The Core Team represents the diversity of programs within the Division and is critical to shaping and ensuring completion of the revised Action Plan. The Division can't do this alone, though, as many agencies, organizations, and people affect the fish, wildlife, and the habitats they depend on. Thus, an Advisory Committee was established to represent the diversity of organizations that have influence on our natural resources. They are essential in providing feedback and guidance on the direction of the Action Plan.

## Core Team:

Michelle Cain, Wildlife Staff Specialist  
Sandy Clark-Kolaks, Southern Fisheries Research Biologist  
Steve Donabauer, Northern Fisheries Research Biologist  
Brant Fisher, Nongame Aquatic Biologist  
Kent Hanauer, Private Lands Wildlife Biologist  
Nate Levitte, Pigeon River FWA Property Manager  
Adam Phelps, Waterfowl Research Biologist  
Sam Whiteleather, Sugar Ridge FWA Property Manager  
Shannon Winks, Private Lands Wildlife Biologist

## Advisory Committee:

Dan Arndt, Duke Energy  
John Bacone, Indiana DNR, Nature Preserves  
David Bausman, Indiana State Department of Agriculture  
Greg Beilfuss, Indiana DNR, Outdoor Recreation  
Ramona Briggeman, Indiana DNR, Reclamation  
Cliff Chapman, Indiana Land Protection Alliance  
Kevin Crane, Indiana Department of Environmental Management  
Andrew DeWoody, Purdue University, Department of Forestry & Natural Resources  
Gary Dinkel, U.S. Forest Service  
Chris Gonso, Indiana DNR, Forestry  
Justin Harrington, Indiana DNR, State Parks and Reservoirs  
Laura Hilden, Indiana Department of Transportation  
Liz Jackson, Indiana Forest & Woodland Owners Association  
Jeff Kiefer, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Raoul Moore, Indiana Forest & Woodland Owners Association  
Mike Mycroft, Indiana DNR, State Parks and Reservoirs  
Brian Nentrup, Pheasants Forever  
Mark Reiter, Indiana DNR, Fish and Wildlife  
Joe Robb, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Justin Schneider, Indiana Farm Bureau  
Mike Sertle, Ducks Unlimited  
John Shuey, The Nature Conservancy  
Barb Simpson, Indiana Wildlife Federation  
Terry Smith, American Electric Power  
Stacy Sobot, Indiana Department of Environmental Management  
Mark Stacy, Indiana DNR, Reclamation  
Dave Stratman, U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Robert Swihart, Purdue University, Department of Forestry & Natural Resources

We would also like to give a special thank you Purdue University, School of Forestry and Natural Resources, for their work toward collecting and analyzing the scientific information for the rewrite. Finally, to Purdue University Cooperative Extension who have assisted us with the preparation and facilitation of these regional meetings.

Thank you again for your participation. We look forward to working with you.

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# SWAP

# INDIANA'S STATE WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN

*Conservation doesn't just happen. It requires resources and collaboration.*



*The forest habitat is home to such species as the Great Horned Owl.*

## SWAP

*Creating positive change for Indiana's fish and wildlife through the work we do together is virtually limitless.*



*Indiana's aquatic systems are home to such species as the plains leopard frog.*

### The Vision

Indiana's State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) is a habitat-based model that incorporates all fish and wildlife species within the state. It identifies the condition of Indiana's wildlife species and habitats, the problems they face, and the actions needed to ensure the long-term success of these species and habitats. Efforts to revise Indiana's SWAP will expand and improve upon the existing information. More importantly, the SWAP will focus on strengthening partnerships to accelerate conservation in the state.

Indiana's SWAP will be a national leader in guiding a diverse conservation community toward the shared goal of enhancing and conserving fish and wildlife resources.

### A Track Record of Success

Indiana's SWAP has:

- Brought more than \$12 million since 2001 to Indiana for species of greatest conservation need.
- Protected species and habitats for the Allegheny Wood Rat, Eastern Hellbender, Lake Sturgeon, Eastern Box Turtle, and many other species.
- Guided statewide conservation efforts for sister organizations and for programs like the Farm Bill.
- Created quality habitat across the state.

### Forging a Path for Future Success

By the end of 2015, Indiana will have revised the SWAP to:

- Be fully integrated throughout the state's diverse conservation community.
- Increase collaboration and bridge efforts among natural resource professionals and stewards.
- Continue protecting species of greatest conservation need.
- Establish a way to collectively track conservation activities and successes.

*Creating positive change for Indiana's fish and wildlife through the work we do together is virtually limitless.*

# SWAPs | STATE WILDLIFE ACTION PLANS

## *A Bold New Direction for Conservation*



In order to receive funds through the Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program and the State Wildlife Grants Program, Congress charged each state and territory with developing a wildlife action plan. These proactive plans, known technically as “comprehensive wildlife conservation strategies,” 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. The state wildlife action plans help conserve wildlife and vital natural areas before they become more rare and more costly to restore. As our communities grow, the SWAPs help us fulfill our responsibility to conserve wildlife and the lands and waters where they live for future generations.

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, they present a national action agenda for preventing wildlife from becoming endangered. States are required to review and revise their state wildlife action plans at least every ten years.

# SWAPs | STATE WILDLIFE ACTION PLANS OVERVIEW



## Who Developed the Wildlife Action Plans?

Primary responsibility for wildlife management has always rested with the States, so they have had the formal authority for developing and implementing the SWAPs. State fish and wildlife agencies have developed these strategic action plans by working with a broad array of partners, including scientists, sportsmen, conservationists, and members of the community. Working together, with input from the public, these diverse coalitions have reached agreement on what needs to be done for the full array of wildlife in every State.

## What Do the Wildlife Action Plans Look Like?

The SWAPs are all required to assess the condition 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. By drawing together all of the scientific data, the SWAPs identify what needs to be done in each State to conserve wildlife and the natural lands and waters where they live – with benefits for both wildlife and people. Each SWAP reflects a different set of local issues, management needs, and priorities, so no two look alike. However, the States have been working together and with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to ensure nationwide coordination.

## What Kinds of Actions Are in the Wildlife Action Plans?

The SWAPs identify a variety of actions aimed at preventing wildlife from declining to the point of becoming endangered. By focusing on conserving the natural lands and clean waters that provide habitat for wildlife, the plans have important benefits for wildlife and people. In addition to specific conservation projects and actions, the plans describe many ways that we can educate the public and private landowners about effective conservation practices. Finally, the plans also identify the information we need in order to improve our knowledge about what kinds of wildlife are in trouble so we can decide what action to take.

## Action Plans with Deliverable Results

What makes the SWAPs different from other plans that have been drafted over the years? A focus on results for all wildlife in every State. These plans are proactive and address the needs of all wildlife in every State. By outlining the steps that need to be taken now, the SWAPs can save us money over the long term. Taken together, they create – for the first time – a nationwide approach to keeping wildlife from becoming endangered. Thus, the States play a major role in the federal endangered species program. Preventing costly endangered species listings is both cost effective and helps prevent populations from becoming too rare to restore. The USFWS endangered species program website features stories and videos of State and federal partnerships to prevent and restore endangered species.

## Eight Required Elements

Congress identified eight required elements to be addressed in each state's wildlife action plan. Congress also 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.

**(1) Species:** Information on the distribution and abundance of species of wildlife, including low and declining populations as the state fish and wildlife agency deems appropriate, that are indicative of the diversity and health of the state's wildlife; and,

**(2) Habitats:** Descriptions of extent and condition of habitats and community types essential to conservation of species identified in (1); and,

**(3) Threats:** Descriptions of problems which may adversely affect species identified in (1) or their habitats, and priority research and survey efforts needed to identify factors which may assist in restoration and improved conservation of these species and habitats; and,

**(4) Conservation Actions:** Descriptions of conservation actions proposed to conserve the identified species and habitats and priorities for implementing such actions; and,

**(5) Monitoring Species & Effectiveness:** Proposed plans for monitoring species identified in (1) and their habitats, for monitoring the effectiveness of the conservation actions proposed in (4), and for adapting these conservation actions to respond appropriately to new information or changing conditions; and,

**(6) Review & Revision:** Descriptions of procedures to review the plan at intervals not to exceed ten years; and,

**(7) Partnerships with Land Management Agencies & Tribes:** Plans for coordinating the development, implementation, review, and revision of the plan with federal, state, and local agencies and Indian tribes that manage significant land and water areas within the state or administer programs that significantly affect the conservation of identified species and habitats.

**(8) Public Participation:** Broad public participation is an essential element of developing and implementing these plans, the projects that are carried out while these plans are developed, and the species in greatest need of conservation.

### Timeline

**2005.** Indiana's first State Wildlife Action Plan published. It was known then as Indiana's Comprehensive Wildlife Strategy. Since then, over \$8 million in federal funding from the State Wildlife Grant program has come to Indiana for wildlife and conservation purposes.

**Late 2011.** Leaders with Indiana Division of Fish and Wildlife recognized the need to further develop and implement the Action Plan within and outside of the agency. In concurrence with the required revision due in 2015, Amanda Wuestefeld and Julie Kempf were appointed project leaders for the Action Plan. The task assigned is two-fold: 1) complete the revision according to federal regulations in order to continue receiving funding and 2) use the Action Plan as a way to increase collaboration among partners and advancing effective conservation beyond Division programs.

**2012-2013.** To focus on greater implementation of the Action Plan with the Division of Fish and Wildlife, a Core Team consisting of ten members representing numerous parts of the division was formed in 2012. As the State Fish and Wildlife Agency, this team is also responsible to make sure the revised plan is completed in 2015. In 2013, the Advisory Committee was also created to represent the greater conservation community. That is, partners who have influence or use the state's natural resources.

Both the Core Team and the Advisory Committee have been instrumental in providing feedback and guidance on the Action Plan efforts. These groups have met several times to have very open and honest discussions about the state of Indiana's natural resources and how the Action Plan can advance conservation. You can find summaries of those conversations and ideas on DNR's website at [www.swap.dnr.in.gov](http://www.swap.dnr.in.gov).

**Fall 2013.** The greater conservation community and general public were made aware of the State Wildlife Action Plan efforts. At three regional kick-off meetings participants were asked for opinions and feedback that has been used to shape the direction of the Action Plan.

**2014.** Experts on habitats, species, and ecological issues, have been consulted with to collect information in order to identify changes that have occurred since publication of the original Plan in 2005. Specific data sought will include the current status of species and habitats, along with threats to them. These experts have been consulted on what actions are best to reduce threats and/or to increase or stabilize declining species populations or habitat quality.

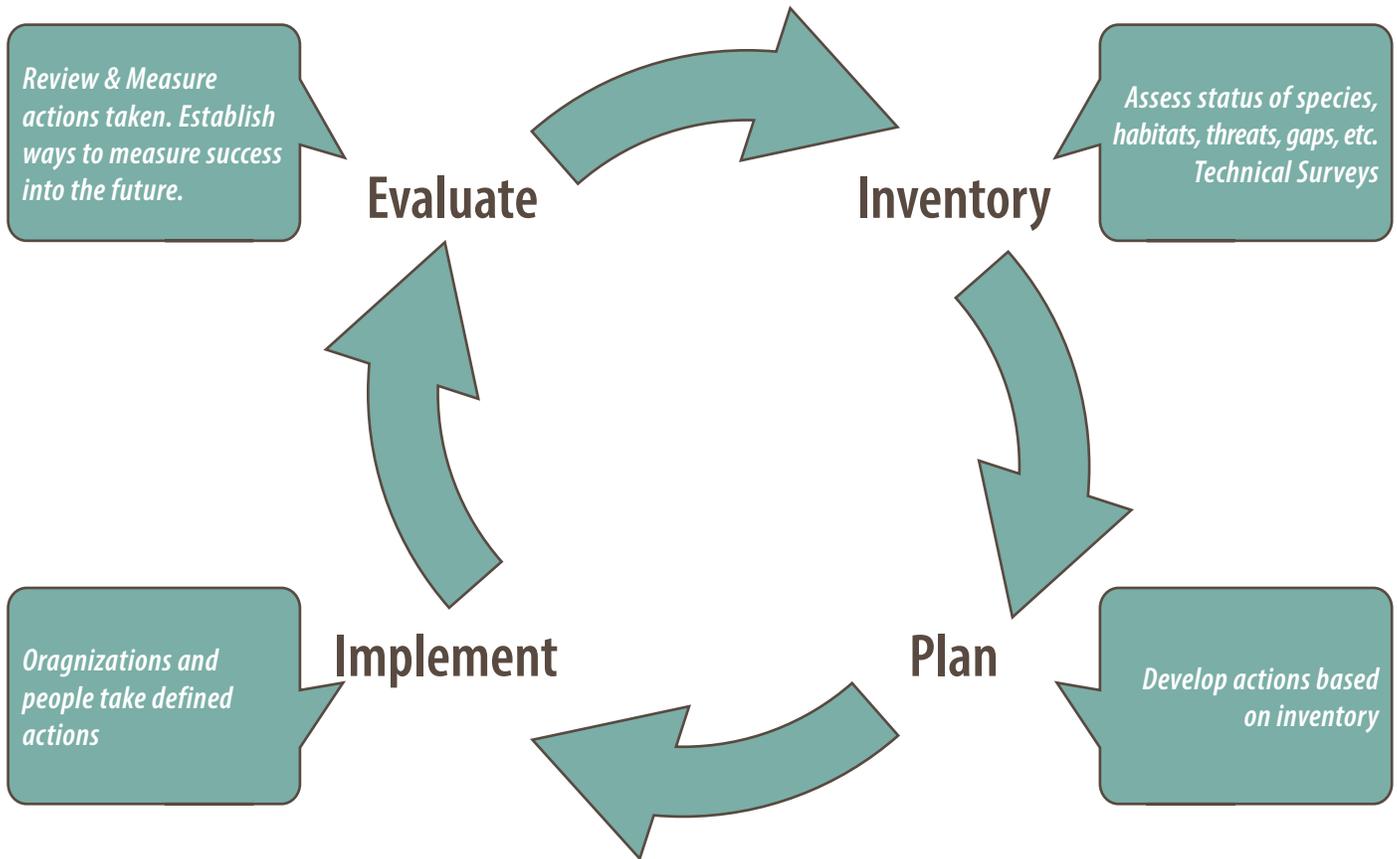
**Today.** The greater conservation community will have an opportunity to review the expert information and comment on it. Focus of feedback will be on what actions are most important, relevant, and feasible for each organization or person.

Based on the feedback from all the experts and members of the conservation community, priority actions will be identified. Actions are anticipated to be focused by habitat within each region for greatest relevancy and potential for implementation.

**2015.** Revision of the Action Plan will be finalized and submitted for federal approval to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

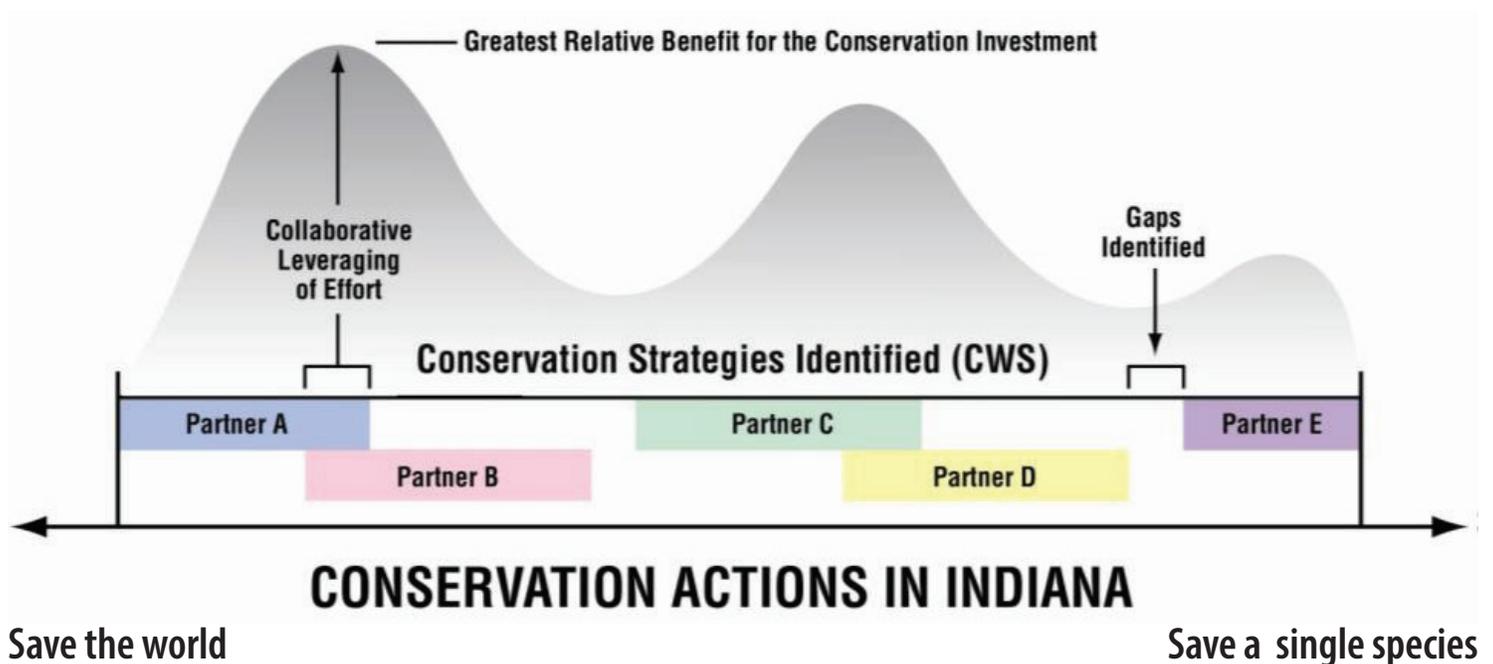
Implementation of the revised Action Plan will begin.

## Stages of the State Wildlife Action Plan



## The Concept Behind Indiana's Wildlife Action Plan

Indiana's State Wildlife Action Plan identifies where partners can or do work collaboratively toward a single goal, whether it is driven by habitat or species. Collaboration should lead to greater conservation benefit. Actions based on habitats should also lead to greater conservation benefit than a single species as multiple species can benefit on a single habitat. Identifying gaps is also important so that crucial conservation gaps can be filled in order to advance conservation. This concept originates with the 2005 Plan and remains relevant today.



## Vision & Mission

The Core Team (consisting of Division of Fish and Wildlife staff) worked early to develop a vision and mission about what they wanted the Action Plan to be and where it would take Indiana's community.

**Vision:** Indiana's State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) will be a national leader in guiding a diverse conservation community toward the shared goal of enhancing and conserving fish and wildlife resources.

**Mission:** The purpose of Indiana's State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) is to manage, conserve, and enhance habitat and population stability for diverse fish and wildlife resources. By 2025, the SWAP will be fully integrated throughout Indiana's conservation community. The SWAP will serve to bridge the efforts of dedicated natural resource professionals and stewards, which will ultimately enrich the quality of life for all Hoosiers.

## Strengths & Areas for Change

The earliest conversations reviewed both the state of natural resources in Indiana and the existing 2005 Action Plan. From those discussions, several areas of strengths and areas needing improvement were identified:

### Strengths

- Federal funds made available for Indiana through the Action Plan.
- Opportunities for partnership began to form.
- Action Plan established solid foundation for the status of habitats and species.
- Plan influenced fish management within Indiana Division of Fish and Wildlife.
- Recognition that conservation is bigger than Division of Fish and Wildlife. It takes everyone.

### Areas for Improvement

- Distribute and implement Plan more broadly within and outside of Division of Fish and Wildlife.
- Stronger tie back to Division of Fish and Wildlife mission. (Plan was too focused on specific sections.)
- Plan identifies changes for conservation and is acted upon with everyone moving toward same goals.
- Need to acknowledge studies completed and results achieved.
- Need to monitor and report on overall Action Plan goals and objectives.

## Positive Change for Conservation in Indiana

Members of the Core Team and the Advisory Committee come from a variety of areas pertaining to natural resources, such as wildlife and fish biologists, researchers, watershed specialists, land management, regulatory agencies, industry groups, universities, non-profit organizations, and sportsmen's and recreation groups. Coming together presented a unique opportunity because we don't always speak the same language or agree on the specifics. However, when we began the conversations about what we valued about Indiana's natural resources, why we were invested in the Action Plan process, or what we hoped for the future of Indiana's resources, we quickly found a lot of common ground. Many members believe in the need for the conservation community to work more collaboratively toward common goals, to become more effective at conservation – avoiding "random acts of conservation," and for people to generally care more about our land and resources. It was clear that we all came together to create positive change for Indiana and to accelerate conservation in the state.

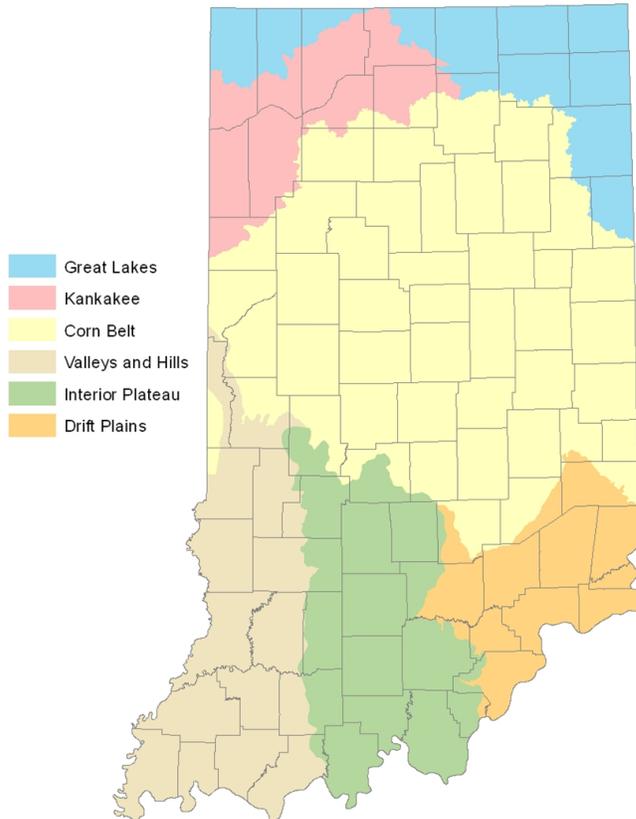
## Opportunities for Indiana's State Wildlife Action Plan

Below is a sample of responses about the types of opportunities that might be presented by Indiana's Wildlife Action Plan.

- Provide guidance on fish and wildlife resources to organizations and people outside of the Division of Fish and Wildlife
- Increase frequency and effectiveness of partnerships
- Concentrate actions on habitats, ecosystems, and landscape conservation
- Expand political support for conservation
- Connect people and wildlife
- Focus where conservation funds are spent to increase effectiveness and avoid "random acts of conservation"
- Generate or leverage funds from sources not previously utilized
- Evaluate and demonstrate conservation successes

# Planning Regions for Indiana State Wildlife Action Plan

Indiana State Wildlife Action Plan  
Planning Regions



Therefore, the Ohio River watershed was further divided using Omernik's ecoregions for southern Indiana: the Interior River Valleys and Hills, the Interior Plateau and the Pre-Wisconsin Drift Plains.

Regions based on Omernik's and Homoya's systems are very similar for southern Indiana. Omernik was chosen because it is based on geology and expands beyond state boundaries. Using Omernik is also consistent with the existing plan that incorporates this classification for wadeable/large rivers in the Ohio River drainage area.

The resulting regional map for Indiana's State Wildlife Action Plan will have 6 planning regions and are presented above.

Indiana's State Wildlife Action Plan needs to include planning regions to better focus actions and priorities based on regional resources, needs, and threats. The existing State Wildlife Action Plan identifies roughly 60 unique habitat types classified within 8 major habitat categories: agriculture, aquatic systems, barren lands, developed lands, forests, grasslands, subterranean systems, and wetlands. Each habitat category is, for the most part, viewed at the state level. Describing regions within Indiana's Action Plan explicitly recognizes that each habitat type varies across the state, including needs, threats, and actions associated with the habitat. A regional approach will also help identify priorities and focus organizations on most relevant actions for a given area.

The regions for Indiana's State Wildlife Action Plan were chosen to reflect both aquatic and terrestrial systems. It is important to consider both types not only because the Plan examines them, but also because of the need to bridge efforts across programs and organizations when possible to maximize the potential for conservation and management. The regions are broad yet reasonable representations of the wildlife and habitats within each region.

A variety of regional maps for Indiana were reviewed, including multiple watershed classifications using the hydrologic unit codes (HUC), Bird Conservation Regions, Omernik's ecoregions, Bailey's ecoregions, and Homoya's natural regions. For Indiana's State Wildlife Action Plan, regions chosen were first based on the three major watersheds present in Indiana: Kankakee River, Great Lakes, and Ohio River. The Kankakee and Great Lakes regions are adequate representations of their natural communities without further subdivision. However, the Ohio River watershed consists of 2/3rds of Indiana and contains too many differences of wildlife and habitats to be an effective planning region.



Get involved and stay updated at [swap.dnr.in.gov](http://swap.dnr.in.gov)

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