

Chapter 7: Coordination with Federal, State, Local, and Tribal Partners

Department Coordination

This chapter addresses Element 7 and describes how DEP developed the CWCS and coordinated with internal and external partners. Appendices 7a and 7b provide detailed information on DEP's framework for conserving the state's natural resources and the CWCS development process, respectively. Appendix 7c summarizes information received from stakeholders and members of the conservation community.

DEP identified its federal, state, local, and tribal partners (see Appendix 7a) and employed the Bleiker Systematic Development of Informed Consent (SDIC) and Citizen Participation by Objective (CPO) process to inform and engage partners throughout the development of the CWCS. Initial contacts with each partner were followed by meetings and on-going information exchange. Partners were asked to review portions of the CWCS during its development.

Meetings were held with key local, state, federal, and tribal partners around the state to encourage input during each step of the development of the CWCS (per Bleiker CPO). Introductory meetings were held to inform them of the project and to solicit input on the CWCS process and recommendations for GCN species and key habitats. Follow-up correspondence occurred on a regular basis throughout 2004-2005 to exchange technical information, coordinate activities, and provide updates. Key partners then participated in larger meetings with their colleagues to consider the range of ideas and diversity of approaches to wildlife conservation in Connecticut. This process resulted in considerable consensus among partners regarding the GCN species list, threats, priority research needs, and conservation actions identified in the CWCS.

Federal Partners

Input from key federal partners was solicited via written and electronic correspondence, invitations to meetings and workshops, and requests to review draft versions of the CWCS. This included, but was not limited to;

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) (Ecological Services, National Wildlife Refuges, Private Lands Program, Coastal Program, Fisheries, and Federal Aid)
- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)
- U.S. Forest Service (USFS)
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACOE)

- U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)
- National Park Service (NPS)
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
- Department of Defense

These key federal partners were encouraged to include GCN species and key habitat conservation efforts identified in the CWCS in their own environmental plans during the next decade. Especially relevant are opportunities within the NRCS Farm Bill programs and USACOE projects to benefit GCN species and key habitats.

State and Local Partners

Similarly, development of the CWCS was coordinated with key state and local partners. At the state level the following entities were contacted:

- CT Office of Policy and Management (Conservation and Development)
- Department of Transportation (Division of Intermodal and Environmental Planning)
- Department of Environmental Protection (all Bureaus and Programs),
- Department of Agriculture
- Agricultural Extension Service
- University of Connecticut
- Other major state universities

DEP BNR staff met with key agencies including Connecticut Department of Transportation, Office of Policy and Management Conservation and Development Planning staff and suggested specific programs and projects where the CWCS could be incorporated. Additional coordination was conducted through meetings and correspondence with the Department of Agriculture, the Agricultural Extension Service, and many DEP programs. An enhanced level of coordination between these agencies and programs resulted from the exchange of information and public updates on plan development. Each partner was informed of the CWCS targets, process, and schedule and was encouraged to include the CWCS information into their conservation/environmental programs.

Additional outreach efforts at the local level (Regional Planning Agencies and Councils of Government) engaged numerous local decision makers across the state and provided an excellent forum for information exchange. A series of regional workshops was held to inform and engage local planning and zoning, and inland wetland conservation commissions and other key municipal leaders about the CWCS. Input and feedback surveys from these workshops provided important information on what data and services would be helpful to local planners and managers in implementing wildlife conservation efforts.

Indian Tribes and Groups

Both of Connecticut's federally-recognized Native American tribes, the Mohegan and Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nations, as well as other Indian groups, who have not received final federal recognition, but who are identified in State Statute as Indian groups, were contacted and provided an opportunity to participate in the development of the CWCS. DEP's tribal liaison provided contact information, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Native American Fish and Wildlife Society provided more detailed information regarding natural resource stewardship programs developed by these entities. A meeting with natural resources staff of the Mohegan and Mashantucket Pequot Tribes was held to discuss the CWCS and to identify opportunities to conserve wildlife and habitat on their lands through the SWG Tribal Grants program.

Continued coordination with federal, state, local, and tribal partners is an essential aspect of the CWCS. The same approach used to coordinate the development of the CWCS will be followed in future revisions. The DEP BNR will take the lead in assuring on-going cooperation with these groups. Engaging these groups in the future review and revision of this CWCS will insure that wildlife conservation efforts in Connecticut are considered at every level of planning and governance.