

1

CHAPTER I.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



IN 2005, INDIANA CREATED ITS FIRST STATE WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN (SWAP).

That initial plan was known as Indiana's Comprehensive Wildlife Strategy (CWS). With the advent of this first plan, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), the Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW), and the broader conservation community, have been able to expand and strengthen fish and wildlife programs. This document is the first revision of that initial effort.

The SWAP is a guide, rather than a detailed habitat or species management plan, for preserving the state's fish and wildlife resources. This document was designed as a living document and a strategic vision with a goal of preserving our state's fish and wildlife diversity. Most importantly, this document forms a framework for developing and coordinating conservation actions involving all conservation partners and safeguarding all fish and wildlife species.

A Core Team of DFW personnel was established to assist the project leaders (Julie Kempf and Amanda Wuestefeld) in the completion of the SWAP. An Advisory Team, representing conservation partners from a wide variety of conservation organizations and agencies, was also created. These two groups, and the greater conservation community, can be credited with the development and implementation of the SWAP.

The following vision and mission statements were developed for the SWAP:

- **Vision:** 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.
- **Mission:** The purpose of Indiana's SWAP is to manage, conserve, and enhance habitats' and populations' 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 resources professionals and stewards, which will ultimately enrich the quality of life for all Hoosiers.

Four main themes were identified as key for the plan's success: environment, conservation community, funding, and citizens. As both the Core Team and Advisory Team met, these four themes continually came to the forefront of the discussion; each identified issue or action needed tied to one or more of these four themes. The overall success of the SWAP will rely on successful outcomes in each of these themes.

The CWS utilized 60 different habitat types within eight major habitat categories. For the SWAP, planning regions were developed in order to better focus conservation efforts. The Core Team, with approval from the Advisory Team, developed the following regions: Great Lakes, Kankakee, Corn Belt, Valleys and Hills, Interior Plateau, and Drift Plains. They also applied the eight distinct habitat types from the CWS to the regional framework. The identified habitat types are: Agricultural Lands, Aquatic Systems, Barren Lands, Developed Lands, Forests, Grasslands, Subterranean Systems, and Wetlands.

Public knowledge, input, and acceptance of the SWAP are crucial for its success. With that in mind, public input was sought and welcomed throughout the development of the first revision. Three regional kickoff meetings were held in 2013 where meeting participants offered opinions and feedback regarding the direction of the SWAP. The information gathered from these meetings aided in shaping the SWAP.

Similar to the original CWS, in-depth surveys were created and utilized in 2014 to consult with noted experts on habitat, species, and ecological issues. These surveys sought specific data on the current status of species and habitats as well as threats to each of them. Experts were consulted as to what actions could be utilized to best reduce threats and increase or stabilize declining species populations and/ or habitat quality. Members of the public and the conservation community were given another opportunity for input while reviewing the survey results. This public input along with that of the experts was also utilized to develop a number of Conservation Opportunity Areas (COA) within the plan's regional framework.

The intent of this revision should be seen as a much more ambitious goal than simply meeting the eight essential elements identified by Congress. The coming-together of the Core Team, Advisory Team, the greater conservation community, and the public as a whole should be seen as an effort to work collaboratively toward our common goals. The intent of the SWAP is to avoid "random acts of conservation" and to help people care more for land and resources. It is the intent of the DFW for this document to serve as the guide not only for future DFW operations but also for that of the conservation community as a whole.