

Executive Summary

The 2015 Kansas State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) revises and replaces the 2005 Kansas Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan as the principle document guiding conservation of Kansas' rich wildlife diversity. This plan is not a compilation of specific management plans but was developed to be a dynamic, adaptive document that will guide Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT) as well as conservation partners in planning and implementation of conservation measures to address priority issues and actions as identified herein. The plan also highlights past projects and success stories implemented through State Wildlife Grants since the initial plan was developed.

The SWAP is built upon eight required elements identified by Congress, with an overall focus as a habitat based plan that began with the consideration of species. The plan is based on the best available information in accord with the intent established by Congress and echoed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. Information provided through projects implemented as a result of the first plan and data from conservation partners helped to fill important pieces of missing data for this revision.

All fish and wildlife in Kansas were evaluated using selection criteria, resulting in the identification of 285 Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). The species were prioritized into two tiers based on natural history data. There are 13 habitats identified as priority for the survival and health of the SGCN.

The SWAP uses a hierarchical classification system which divided Kansas into three conservation regions: (1) Shortgrass Prairie, (2) Central Mixed-Grass Prairie, and (3) Eastern Tallgrass Prairie. Within each region, geographically explicit areas in which to address conservation has been a major focus of this revision. These Ecological Focus Areas (EFA) represent landscapes where conservation actions can be applied for maximum benefits to Kansas wildlife (summary map found below). For each EFA, a suite of SGCN with ranking tiers, priority habitats, and a unique set of conservation actions designed to address the specific resource concerns have been provided in the plan. Due to data differences between ecosystems, EFAs have been separated into aquatic and terrestrial species and habitats.

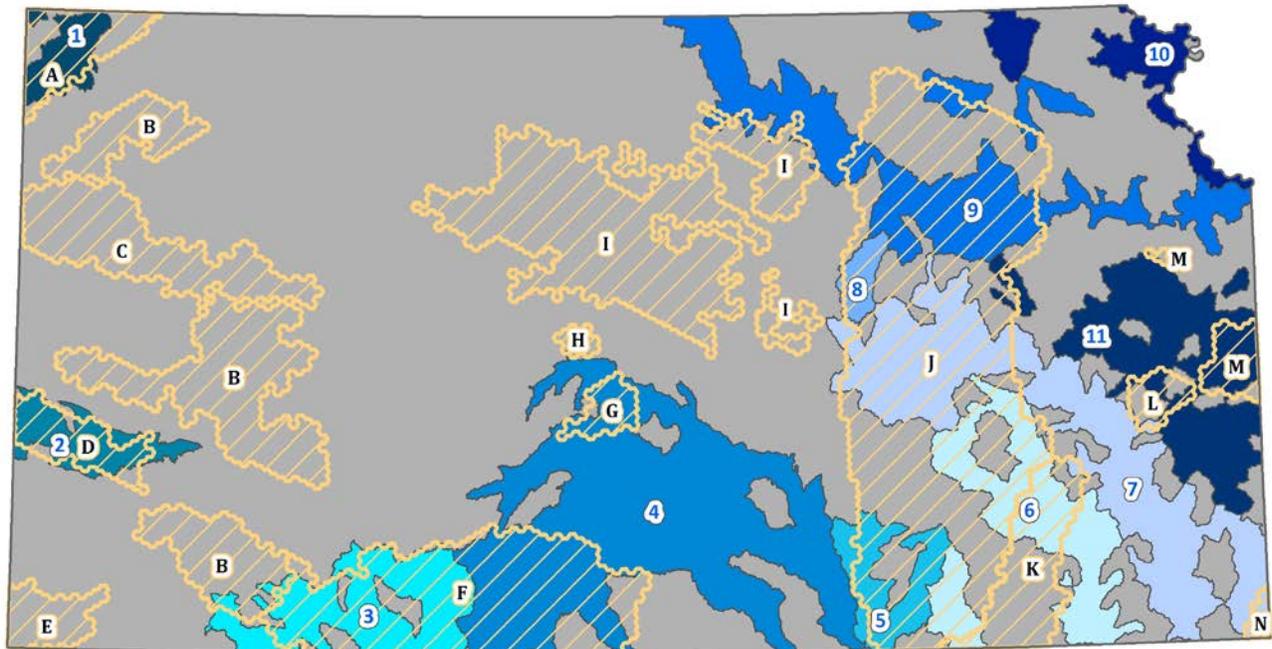
Many issues affecting biodiversity are not specific to certain EFAs and occur across the entire state. The statewide conservation issues have been identified as: (a) residential and commercial development, (b) agriculture (farming and ranching), (c) energy production, (d) natural systems modification, (e) pollution, and (f) invasive species. Other issues that occur statewide but are not considered direct threats to biodiversity are; (a) existing data gaps and lack of knowledge, and (b) inadequate coordination between government agencies.

A new component to the SWAP is the addition of a consideration of how Climate Change might impact Kansas wildlife. Climate change will present new challenges for KDWPT. Climate change was addressed by analyzing the vulnerability of a subset of the state's SGCN to climate change. This subset represented species from each taxonomic group with geographic variance and habitat use. The vulnerability analysis assists in developing strategies to deal with actual or expected climatic effects. These strategies will vary among the ecosystems in Kansas.

Building on the structure from the first plan, KDWPT continues to collaborate with our conservation partners in academia and other state/federal agencies. The feedback and assistance from these groups, their willingness to participate in all aspects of the plan revision, and overall support is outstanding. Also of critical importance is the support from Kansas residents for various programs and issues surrounding the protection and management of sensitive species as shown in the survey “Kansas Resident’s Opinions on Threatened and Endangered Wildlife and Actions to Protect Wildlife” (Duda 2011). The survey showed that an overwhelming majority of Kansas residents (91%) agree that KDWPT should continue to identify and protect critical habitat to maintain the existence of threatened and endangered wildlife.

The purpose of the SWAP is not to produce a plan – it is to implement actions and to improve fish and wildlife conservation in the future. It identifies broad priorities on species habitats, issues, and by inference, strategies and conservation actions. New funding will be focused on the priorities identified in this plan. Monitoring of new information and conservation progress will identify changes that need to be made. The KDWPT will continue its on-going commitment, communication and coordination with all conservation stakeholders. Kansas’ SWAP will remain a vital, adaptive template for future fish and wildlife conservation efforts in the state.

The development of Kansas’ SWAP is based upon the guidance provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, and many colleagues from other state fish and wildlife agencies. It is funded in part by the State Wildlife Grant T-2-11-R-1 Revision of the Kansas Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan.



Ecological Focus Areas

Kansas Boundary

Aquatic Focus Areas

Terrestrial Focus Areas

- A - Arikaree Breaks
- B - Playa Landscape
- C - Smoky Hill River Breaks
- D - Arkansas River Sandsage Prairie
- E - Cimarron Grasslands
- F - Red Hills
- G - Quivira

Terrestrial

- H - Cheyenne Bottoms
- I - Smoky Hills
- J - Flint Hills
- K - Chautauqua Hills
- L - Eastern Tallgrass Prairies
- M - Eastern Forests
- N - Ozark Plateau

Aquatic

- 1 - Upper Republican
- 2 - Upper Arkansas
- 3 - Cimarron
- 4 - Lower Arkansas
- 5 - Walnut
- 6 - Verdigris
- 7 - Neosho
- 8 - Smoky Hill
- 9 - Lower Republican
- 10 - Missouri
- 11 - Marais des Cygnes

EFAs can be found in corresponding chapters: Ch 4-ABCDE, 1 2 Ch 5-BCFGHI, 3 4 9 Ch 6-JKLMN 5 6