

# A Timeline of Alligator Snapping Turtle Conservation Efforts in Kansas

1974 – Alligator Snapping Turtle identified by experts as Endangered in Kansas.

1978 – State listing went into effect.

1984 – Proposed for listing under the federal Endangered Species Act. Denied due to lack of ecological information.

1985 – First KDWP funded survey, which focused on the lower Arkansas, Neosho, and Verdigris Rivers. No Alligator Snapping Turtle were captured.

1986 – Alligator Snapping Turtle down-listed to SINC in Kansas due to lack of significant biological information evidence.

1986 – Last known Alligator Snapping Turtle captured in Kansas on Onion Creek, Montgomery County. Turtle was outfitted with radio transmitter and was subsequently lost.

1987 – Second round of KDWP funded surveys on Arkansas and Verdigris River drainages. No Alligator Snapping Turtles were captured.

1989 – Publication of *The Alligator Snapping Turtle: Biology and Conservation* by Peter C. H. Pritchard. This publication was the impetus for all late 20<sup>th</sup> century survey work.

1991 – Third round of KDWP sponsored survey work took place across the eastern-third of Kansas. No Alligator Snapping Turtles were captured.

1991 – The last known Alligator Snapping Turtle was recaptured via trotline by a fisherman. Transmitters were replaced and the turtle was followed for one year.

1991 – The species status reviewed on the federal level, but no further action taken.

1991 – Petitioned to up list at the state level but was denied due to lack of a breeding population in the state.

1997 – A three-year state-wide survey was initiated in Oklahoma by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation. A major finding was the absence of Alligator Snapping Turtle from many sites. Many repressed populations were separated from healthy populations by impoundments.

1997 – A survey on Labette Creek, Labette County, KS was funded by Kansas Army Ammunition Plant near the site of two historic records. No Alligator Snapping Turtles were captured.

2001 – The initial broodstock for the captive breeding program were removed from Sequoyah National Wildlife Refuge and transported to the Tishomingo National Fish Hatchery. The mission was to breed and head-start the species to bypass dams and repopulate stream fragments.

2006 – Finalized “A Proposal to re-introduce Alligator Snapping Turtles (*Macrochelys temminckii*) into Eastern Oklahoma River Drainages”. This plan prioritized northern Oklahoma sites near Kansas due to good habitat and distance from illegal commercial harvest in southeastern States.

2007 – Presentations were made at Kansas Herpetological Society meeting about impending releases in northern Oklahoma. Discussions were had with KDWP personnel, who had no issues with turtles moving northward from release sites in Kansas.

2008 – Position paper on management and reintroduction of Alligator Snapping Turtles published in *Transactions of the Kansas Academy of Science*. When Oklahoma and Kansas distributional data were compiled together, the importance of the Neosho and Verdigris River drainages as north-south movement corridors was highlighted.

2011 – Former KDWP Videographer Mike Blair filmed a segment on a sampling effort in the Caney River in Kansas.

2012 – Center for Biological Diversity petitioned USFWS to list Alligator Snapping Turtle under the Endangered Species Act.

2015 – 90-day finding found that substantial information was presented, and that listing may be warranted under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

2017 – A multi-state Section 6 grant consisting of KS and OK was funded to survey Kansas historic sites and OK release sites. No Alligator Snapping Turtles were captured at historic KS sites, and no marked and released OK Alligator Snapping Turtles were captured north of the state line.

2018 – KDWP participated as part of the USFWS Species Status Assessment (SSA) team.

2019 – Missouri State University conducted a seasonal activity study with Juvenile Alligator Snapping Turtles at Farlington Fish Hatchery.

2020 - A second multi-state Section 6 Grant consisting of KS and OK was funded to continue survey work in Kansas and post-release Monitoring in Oklahoma. Again, no Alligator Snapping Turtles were captured in Kansas. Older released turtles on the Caney River exhibited uterine scarring indicative of egg production. This was the first sign of maturity and reproduction in any of the introduced populations. Potential release sites on the Verdigris and Neosho rivers were identified.

2020 – Wrote a column for the Wildlife and Parks magazine on the history of Alligator Snapping Turtle in Kansas.

2021 - The USFWS issued a 12-month finding with a proposed listing of Alligator Snapping Turtle as Threatened. Finding included a 4d exemption for conservation releases. No final rule has yet been issued.

2021 – Completed Programmatic Safe Harbor Agreement and Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances, which included Alligator Snapping Turtle. Agreement promotes conservation releases on private lands.

2021 – Began including species identification information for snapping turtles in Kansas fishing regulations.

2022 – KDWP participated in second round of the USFWS SSA.

2024 – KDWP participated on IUCN Red List Assessment of the Alligator Snapping Turtle elevating the current global status of the species from Vulnerable to Endangered.

2024 – First release into Kansas waters.