

Dear Conservation Partner:

The Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) was charged with the development of a statewide Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan, now called Nevada's Wildlife Action Plan. This planning process was required of each state to continue to receive federal funds through the State Wildlife Grants program. Nevada's original Wildlife Action Plan was completed and approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in December, 2005. To date, NDOW has received over \$12 million in federal dollars through the State Wildlife Grants program.

NDOW coordinated and led a conservation partner planning team to revise Nevada's Wildlife Action Plan to incorporate the potential impacts of emerging and expanding stressors including accelerated energy development, invasive species and changing climate on Nevada's fish, wildlife, and habitats. NDOW again partnered with the original Wildlife Action Plan team: The Nevada Natural Heritage Program, The Lahontan Audubon Society, The Nature Conservancy, and also The Great Basin Bird Observatory to develop this revision to the plan. This partnership team was awarded a State Lands Question 1 Bond Habitat Conservation Planning grant in order to help fund these efforts.

NDOW worked with multiple stakeholders to assess key habitats and species most likely to be affected by these stressors and is developing effective strategies for managing and mitigating impacts. By identifying key conservation actions, we will be in a stronger position to ensure ecosystem resiliency across the changing landscape for key habitats and species. Primary focus centered on proactively preventing species from being listed as threatened or endangered as well as the restoration of species already listed through the constant assessment of the status and needs of wildlife and their habitat and the initiation of responsive action before critical thresholds are crossed.

The Eight Required Elements Addressed in the Nevada Wildlife Action Plan

This WAP sets a strategic vision for wildlife conservation in Nevada. To further clarify the vision, WAP revisions must continue to address the required eight elements as mandated by Congress:

1. Information about wildlife species numbers and distribution,
2. Descriptions of key habitats and locations,
3. Descriptions of problems that may affect identified species and research needed to improve the situations,
4. Descriptions of proposed actions for conservation of the identified wildlife and their habitats,
5. Descriptions of how the species and results of the actions will be monitored,
6. Descriptions of how the strategy will be reviewed and updated on a periodic basis,
7. Coordination with federal, state, local agencies and Indian tribes if the plan impacts land managed by these groups, and,
8. Public participation to identify their priorities.

NDOW and the Revision Team coordinated with state, federal, and local agencies, and conservation organizations to gather pertinent information for the plan revision. An overview of the revision process was provided to the Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners in December 2011. A series of public scoping meetings were held the winter of 2012 in Elko, Las Vegas, and Reno, Nevada. The draft revised Wildlife Action Plan was posted to NDOW's website for review and comment in January 2012. Following the scoping meetings and comment period, the Wildlife Action Plan was revised based on feedback received. The final revised plan was completed and submitted to the USFWS for approval in September 2012. The plan was approved by the USFWS on March 1, 2013.

Major elements of the revision process that the Team developed are described by header below:

Habitat Analysis

The Nature Conservancy took on the task of predictive modeling of climate change effects on Nevada's vegetative communities. TNC measured ecological condition using two landscape-scale metrics for each ecological system: ecological departure from the reference condition and the percentage of high-risk vegetation classes. Additionally, TNC provided results of each vegetation class, which was essential to relate changes in vegetation structure and food availability to the needs of wildlife species. The results of Landscape Conservation Forecasting™ applied to each of Nevada's 13 regions were provided to NDOW in the report, "*Climate Change Revisions to Nevada's Wildlife Action Plan: Vegetation Mapping and Modeling*" (posted separately on this web page).

Species Vulnerability Analysis

Concurrent with habitat modeling, the Nevada Natural Heritage Program conducted a wildlife species vulnerability analysis using the NatureServe Climate Change Vulnerability Index (CCVI) evaluation program to determine which wildlife species exhibited characteristics that might uniquely hinder their adaptation to climate change, including but not limited to general mobility, physiological challenges, dependence on certain vegetation types or plant species, etc.

Avian Climate Change Response Modeling

The Great Basin Bird Observatory was contracted to provide specific data-supported climate change predictions for Nevada's breeding birds using point-count data from the Nevada Bird Count (NBC), a statistically-rigorous 10-year database with georeferencing and coarse-scale habitat association capability. The results of the GBBO report are presented in the report "*Bird Population Responses to Projected Effects of Climate Change in Nevada: An Analysis for*

Revision of the Nevada Wildlife Action Plan" (posted separately on this web page).

Pulling It All Together

Once the analytical products were completed, the Revision Team had to integrate the results to project the future of wildlife on Nevada landscapes over the next 50 years under a changing climate. Seven major tasks were undertaken:

1. Revision of the Species of Conservation Priority List
2. Revision of the ecological framework to integrate the new vegetative analysis
3. Analysis of how ecological system changes/shifts were likely to impact living conditions and survival potential for priority species within relevant regional contexts
4. The construction of conservation strategy to maximize the preservation of wildlife diversity in Nevada
5. Revision of the Focal Area analysis
6. Revision of the Implementation and Adaptive Management Framework
7. Revision of the Wildlife Action Plan itself with meaningful partner/stakeholder participation and review

This Nevada Wildlife Action Plan Revision is organized into 11 major sections:

- Introduction
- An Overview of Nevada
- Approach & Methods
- Nevada's Wildlife Heritage
- Challenges in Wildlife Management
- Identification of Species of Conservation Priority
- Defining Nevada's Landscape for Wildlife
- The Conservation Strategies for Nevada's 22 Key Habitats and Their Associated Wildlife
- Key Partnerships and Implementation Mechanisms
- Conservation Education and Watchable Wildlife
- Species Accounts

The sections are intended to complement each other and work together to describe the task of comprehensive wildlife conservation in Nevada, the partners expected to participate in its ultimate achievement, and the expectations and methods of implementation.

Use of this Plan

The Nevada Wildlife Action Plan (WAP) serves as a comprehensive, landscape level plan, identifying the species of greatest conservation need and the key habitats on which they depend, with the intent to prevent wildlife species from becoming threatened

or endangered. The WAP contains conservation actions to provide guidance to successfully conserve Nevada's key habitats and priority species. Many of the conservation actions within the WAP are strategies identified in other existing conservation plans. During WAP implementation, conservation actions developed at the state or local level would be used to provide guidance to address site-specific conditions as appropriate. Some of these actions may be applicable at the land use plan level, and some more appropriately applied at an activity plan or site-specific plan level.

The next step in the ongoing implementation phase will be to tier down possible actions identified in the WAP that will form the basis for prioritized work plans, site-specific decisions, and planned actions. Wildlife conservation partners and stakeholders will be encouraged to contribute to and review these implementation processes.

Also posted separately on this web page are two supporting documents for the Wildlife Action Plan:

The Nature Conservancy report "*Climate Change Revisions to Nevada's Wildlife Action Plan: Vegetation Mapping and Modeling*", and

The Great Basin Bird Observatory report "*Bird Population Responses to Projected Effects of Climate Change in Nevada: An Analysis for Revision of the Nevada Wildlife Plan.*"