



Rhode Island Wildlife Action Plan

Element Guide and Change Log

RHODE ISLAND WAP ELEMENT GUIDE AND CHANGE LOG

Table of Contents

Document Purpose 1

Rhode Island’s First Revision..... 1

A Partnership Approach..... 1

Engaging Stakeholder and Public Participation..... 2

Use and Format of this Plan..... 2

The Eight Required Elements 2

 Element Number 1 3

 Element Number 2 5

 Element Number 3 7

 Element Number 4..... 9

 Element Number 5 12

 Element Number 6 14

 Element Number 7 15

 Element Number 8 16

RHODE ISLAND WAP ELEMENT GUIDE AND CHANGE LOG

Document Purpose

The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management's Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (RI DEM DWF) has prepared this guide to Rhode Island's Wildlife Action Plan (WAP) for the Regional Review Team and others to readily find sections that address each of the eight required Elements. This WAP addresses the eight Elements identified by Congress and guidance for each sub-element provided by the National and Regional Advisory Acceptance Team.

Rhode Island's First Revision

With this revision, Rhode Island presents its updates and improvements from the 2005 original Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS) for each of the eight Elements. It begins with a reassessment of RI's conservation targets- Species of Greatest Conservation Need) SGCN and key habitats and provides more detailed mapping of them and priority conservation areas. It reassesses threats affecting these SGCN fish and wildlife, and their habitats using an IUCN/TRACS compatible approach. It applies AFWA's Best Practices and USFWS Guidance and incorporates additional information on climate change. This revision presents the results of an updated process to identify and prioritize conservation actions to address or alleviate these threats again applying the IUCN/TRACS compatible approach through engagement of multiple partners and stakeholders. It describes plans for monitoring and review/revision of the conservation targets and the effectiveness of the plan. Finally it outlines the partner, stakeholder, and public input process used during the three -year revision process.

The goal of the WAP is to provide direction of conservation efforts for the next decade. It represents a vision and a strategy that the RI DEM shares with its partners for conservation of fish and wildlife in the state.

A Partnership Approach

For the 2015 RI WAP revision, a strong and unique partnership was formed between the RI DEM and the Rhode Island Chapter of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) to leverage financial resources and staff expertise. This effort was further enhanced by the University of Rhode Island (URI) and the RI Natural History Survey (RINHS) which both provided extensive project and technical assistance and input as key members of the core team and each of the taxa and habitat teams. To support this collaboration, an organizational structure was created consisting of a Core Steering Team, Technical Committee, Outreach Team and Scientific Review Team (comprised of 6 taxa/habitat teams) to guide the process and the end products towards completion and provide the necessary planning and technical expertise. Engaging partners up front in the revision process fostered an inclusive and transparent process, ownership, and buy-in, promoting future support from those partners in RI WAP implementation and funding. This partnership culminated in the cooperative RI WAP Community Liaison position to assist in soliciting input for the development and the implementation of the WAP at the local level. This need was identified as a high priority action in the 2005 CWCS and will greatly enhance the use and functionality of this plan revision, the species and habitat profiles and the Community Companion Guide to the WAP over the next decade.

RHODE ISLAND WAP ELEMENT GUIDE AND CHANGE LOG

Engaging Stakeholder and Public Participation

As part of the 2015 RI WAP revision process, RI DEM solicited input from key local, state, and regional stakeholder entities comprising multiple sectors of the public. Engaging stakeholders and the public was a priority throughout the 3-year process to foster an inclusive and transparent process, create shared ownership of the plan, and produce a plan that adequately reflects their values. Opportunities ranged from Scientific Review Workshops to solicit technical expertise; to meetings with local planners, municipalities, conservation groups, and land trusts; to opportunities for the general public to provide feedback and input on the draft report via press releases, meetings and social media.

Use and Format of this Plan

This WAP document is presented in three complementary formats: first, this strategic plan (i.e., RI WAP); second, the accompanying Species and Key Habitat Profiles; and third, a Community Companion Guide to the RI WAP. All of these formats are available on the RI DEM RI WAP web site in an easily navigable version with bookmarks within and between each component.

<http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/bnatres/fishwild/swap15.htm>

The RI WAP SGCN and Key Habitat Profiles are user-friendly fact sheets that can be used individually or by group (e.g. Mammals, Birds, Reptiles and Amphibians, Fish, Invertebrates and their Key Habitats). These profiles contain photographs, distribution maps, status information, brief descriptions, and threats and actions. These profiles, and the information from which they were created, are the result of significant research and updates and input from RI and regional taxa experts, partners and stakeholders.

The RI WAP Community Companion Guide is a short guide intended as customized, condensed information that is relevant at the local level. It provides information and tools for communities to implement the RI WAP by conserving fish, wildlife and their habitats. Input was solicited to best format and provide the tools they need through these documents and future customized technical assistance for delivery of RI WAP information.

Together these documents present the most current information available on Rhode Island's wildlife and on the habitats and natural systems that support it. It also includes detailed information on the various threats to wildlife and to individual species in the state and outlines strategies for addressing those threats.

The Eight Required Elements

An important component of Rhode Island's WAP is meeting the required Elements identified by Congress. Addressing the eight Elements makes the state eligible to receive federal funding in the form of State Wildlife Grants, a program administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

RHODE ISLAND WAP ELEMENT GUIDE AND CHANGE LOG

Element Number 1. Information on the distribution and abundance of species of wildlife, including low and declining populations as the State fish and wildlife agency deems appropriate, that are indicative of the diversity and health of the State's wildlife.

Element 1 Sub-elements	WAP Section	Table or Figure
A. The Plan indicates sources of information (e.g., literature, data bases, agencies, individuals) on wildlife abundance and distribution consulted during the planning process.	Chapter 1 Bibliography Appendix 1a Appendix 5 Appendix 7a Appendix 7d	Table 7.2
B. The Plan includes information about both abundance and distribution for species in all major groups to the extent that data are available. There are plans for acquiring information about species for which adequate abundance and/or distribution information is unavailable.	Chapter 1 Appendix 1b Appendix 1c Species Profiles	Figure 1.1 Figure 1.2 Figure 1.3 Figure 1.4 Table 1.4 Table 1.6 Table 1.8 Table 1.9 Table 1.10 Table 1.11
C. The Plan identifies low and declining populations to the extent data are available.	Chapter 1 Appendix 1b Appendix 1c	Table 1.2 Table 1.3 Table 1.4 Table 1.6 Table 1.8 Table 1.9 Table 1.10 Table 1.11
D. All major groups of wildlife have been considered or an explanation is provided as to why they were not (e.g., including reference to implemented marine fisheries management plans). The state may indicate whether these groups are to be included in a future Plan revision.	Chapter 1 Appendix 1a Appendix 1b Appendix 1e Appendix 1f	Figure 1.5 Table 1.2 Table 1.12
E. The Plan describes the process used to select the species in greatest need of conservation. The quantity of information in the Plan is determined by the state with input from its partners, based on what is available to the state.	Chapter 1 Appendix 1b Appendix 1c Appendix 1e Appendix 1f	Table 1.12 Table 1.13

Chapter 1 presents updated summary status information for species with low and declining populations as well as other criteria listed in the NE Lexicon to be considered as species of greatest conservation need (SGCN), along with the best sources for this information (Appendix 1a). The 2015 list of SGCN for Rhode Island includes 454 species, which is 91 more species than appeared on the SGCN list in 2005. Appendix 1e and 1f provide a summary of vertebrate and invertebrate additions and deletions, respectively. These Appendices also give a key to the reason for each addition or deletion. This figure results from the addition of 182 species and the removal of 91 others. SGCN include 212 vertebrates – 21

RHODE ISLAND WAP ELEMENT GUIDE AND CHANGE LOG

mammals, 123 birds, 13 reptiles, 10 amphibians, 45 fish - and 242 invertebrates (Appendix 1b). All species in marine, freshwater and terrestrial environments were considered.

In addition, more detailed profiles of each species or group of species have been developed for the first time in Rhode Island. These Species Profiles address the status, abundance and distribution, threats and actions for each of these species/groups (addressing Elements 1-4). They were developed in response to partner and stakeholder requests for more targeted, user friendly, and easy to find information on RI's fish and wildlife species.

Also new in Chapter 1 is an overview of Rhode Island's wildlife, within a regional context that encompasses thirteen states from Maine to Virginia and D.C. The Northeast Fish and Wildlife Diversity Technical Committee (NEFWDTC), of the Northeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (NEAFWA), has identified regional species of greatest conservation need (RSGCN, Appendix 1c).

RHODE ISLAND WAP ELEMENT GUIDE AND CHANGE LOG

Element Number 2. Descriptions of locations and relative condition of key habitats and community types essential to conservation of species identified in the 1st element.

Element 2 Sub-elements	WAP Section	Table or Figure
A. The Plan provides a reasonable explanation for the level of detail provided; if insufficient, the Plan identifies the types of future actions that will be taken to obtain the information.	Chapter 2 Chapter 4 Appendix 2a Appendix 2b Appendix 3 Key Habitat Profiles	
B. Key habitats and their relative conditions are described in enough detail such that the state can determine where (i.e., in which regions, watersheds, or landscapes within the state) and what conservation actions need to take place.	Chapter 2 Chapter 4 Appendix 2a Appendix 2b Appendix 3 Key Habitat Profiles	Figure 2.1 Figure 2.2 Figure 2.3 Figure 2.4 Figure 2.5 Figure 2.6 Figure 2.7 Figure 2.8 Figure 2.9 Figure 2.10 Figure 2.12 Figure 2.13 Figure 2.14 Figure 2.15 Figure 2.16 Figure 2.17 Figure 2.18 Table 2.1 Table 2.2 Table 2.3 Table 2.4 Table 2.5 Table 2.6

Identification of key habitats involved input and analysis/review by RI DEM DFW staff, and other scientific experts, and stakeholders. Assessment of key habitats began with a review of relevant partner program efforts. RI DEM DFW had previously assessed the location and relative condition of rare species in the state, and NHP and DFW rare species habitat information was also reevaluated. Critical areas for rare species and biodiversity focus areas had also been identified by the NHP.

Significant mapping improvements resulted from a high priority action in the 2005 CWCS to secure better digital data for RI habitats. RI DEM and partners acquired current aerial photography and conducted ground-truthing to allow for more accurate key habitat mapping (Appendix 2b). Additional partner efforts such as URI’s Habitat Atlas provides information and photographs of RI’s habitats.

Neighboring states were contacted for coordination and to provide regional consistency and standardization. The Technical Team assessed information from the standardized existing ecosystem and vegetative classification systems available at that time, with special emphasis placed on those systems and habitat codes that were represented in RI GIS to facilitate geospatial analysis and monitoring efforts. The

RHODE ISLAND WAP ELEMENT GUIDE AND CHANGE LOG

RIECC and complimentary national and regional vegetation classifications provided the foundation for the key habitat identifications.

The 2015 process was significantly improved by expanding the Habitat and GIS/mapping team and in using new state and regional classification systems. The RIECC was adopted as the state-level foundation for identifying key habitats because of its greater precision in naming and delineating community types beyond the NETHCS. The regional foundations of the NETHCS and NEAHCS provided the regional perspective and consistency when determining condition, threats, and actions for each terrestrial and aquatic habitat. Marine habitats were also assessed using the new CMECS as a foundation.

An initial list of habitats important to fish and wildlife SGCN in Rhode Island was prepared by the Technical Team, generated from the primary habitat associations assigned to each species. Further input and analysis by the Habitat/GIS and Scientific teams helped to refine these habitats in terms of data available for monitoring and mapping to best evaluate condition and location. Key habitats were cross-walked with the NETHCS and NEAHCS classifications for regional consistency (Appendix 2a), and profiles of each habitat with descriptions, their location and relative condition were produced (Key Habitat Profiles). SGCN and key habitats are the foundational targets used to identify threats and create actions to address them in the RI WAP.

Chapter 2 provides an updated analysis of the various ecological systems that characterize the state, including: forests, non-forested uplands, early successional habitats (many created when former farmland is abandoned), agricultural lands, fresh water wetlands, estuarine wetlands, salt-marshes, lakes and ponds, and marine habitats. These systems were evaluated in terms of their importance to biodiversity, current condition, degree of threat, and vulnerability to climate change, a significant improvement for the 2015 WAP.

RHODE ISLAND WAP ELEMENT GUIDE AND CHANGE LOG

Element Number 3. Descriptions of problems which may adversely affect species identified in the 1st element or their habitats, and priority research and survey efforts needed to identify factors which may assist in restoration and improved conservation of these species and habitats.

Element 3 Sub-elements	WAP Section	Table or Figure
A. The Plan indicates sources of information (e.g., literature, databases, agencies, or individuals) used to determine the problems or threats.	Chapter 3 Chapter 4 Appendix 1a Appendix 3 Appendix 4 Appendix 5	Table 1.3 Table 1.7 Table 2.1 Table 3.1 Table 7.2 Figure 2.6 Figure 2.8 Figure 2.9 Figure 2.10 Figure 2.11 Figure 2.14 Figure 2.18
B. The threats/problems are described in sufficient detail to develop focused conservation actions (for example, “increased highway mortalities” or “point source pollution” rather than generic descriptions such as “development” or “poor water quality”).	Chapter 3 Chapter 4 Appendix 3 <i>Community Wildlife Conservation Guide</i>	Table 3.1 Table 3.6 Table 3.9 Table 3.10
C. The Plan considers threats/problems, regardless of their origins (local, state, regional, national and international), where relevant to the state’s species and habitats.	Chapter 3 Chapter 4 Appendix 3 Species Profiles Key Habitat Profiles <i>Community Wildlife Conservation Guide</i>	Figure 3.1 Figure 3.2 Figure 3.3 Figure 3.4 Figure 3.5 Figure 3.6 Figure 3.7 Figure 3.8 Figure 3.9 Figure 3.10 Figure 3.11 Figure 3.12
D. If available information is insufficient to describe threats/problems, research and survey efforts are identified to obtain needed information.	Chapter 3 Chapter 4 Appendix 3 Appendix 4 Species Profiles Key Habitat Profiles	
E. The priority research and survey needs, and resulting products, are described sufficiently to allow for the development of research and survey projects after the Plan is approved.	Chapter 3 Chapter 4 Appendix 3 Appendix 4	

RHODE ISLAND WAP ELEMENT GUIDE AND CHANGE LOG

Chapter 3 provides an update for the threats to SGCN and their habitats in Rhode Island. Some of these threats are global or national, while others are regional, statewide, or local. They include threats or “problems” that stress wildlife (species and/or habitat) as well as management challenges caused by inadequate data, insufficient resources, or other limitations.

To provide consistency in identifying threats to SGCN and key habitats, the IUCN standard lexicon of threats was used. “Threats” are defined as, “the proximate human activities or processes that have caused, are causing, or may cause the destruction, degradation, and/or impairment of biodiversity targets.” The RI WAP Technical Committee applied this lexicon when identifying the specific threats to Rhode Island SGCN and key habitats (Appendix 3). Use of this terminology also provided a sufficient level of detail to create actions to address threats.

The IUCN classification system was also used to report threats at the state level, the taxa level, the habitat level and the species level. The NE lexicon was used to assess degree of threat. The RI WAP Technical and Scientific Teams reviewed and reevaluated the threats listed in the 2005 CWCS as well as additional updated threat information according to these standardized protocols. Climate change and emerging diseases are examples of threats where more updated information was incorporated into the threats determination, assessment and ranking process for this revision.

Through a series of workshops, teams of experts, partners and stakeholders identified and ranked threats based on the 2005 information and additional new sources information (Appendix 1a). Teams then grouped and condensed these threats, where similar, for species suites, habitat associations, or broader taxa applicability. A similar process was conducted for identifying and updating threats to each key habitat. Habitat threats were also grouped and condensed to higher tier habitat groupings whenever possible to reduce redundancy and highlight common threats. Chapter 2 presents the best available assessment (by the Technical and Habitat Teams) of degree of threat to each key habitat and its relative condition.

To highlight the link from threats and actions, priority actions presented in this document are linked to the threat addressed. Threats are coupled with actions and are listed at the most appropriate hierarchical level (from general statewide to specific species) in Chapter 4, and are listed in the Species and Key Habitat Profiles. Appendix 3 outlines threats at the statewide, taxa, and habitat levels including where information was insufficient and research or survey methods are needed.

In addition to the primary threats to key habitats identified by the Habitat Technical Team, the individual taxa teams have identified threats that impact individual SGCN or groups of species.

RHODE ISLAND WAP ELEMENT GUIDE AND CHANGE LOG

Element Number 4. Descriptions of conservation actions determined to be necessary to conserve the identified species and habitats and priorities for implementing such actions.

Element 4 Sub-elements	WAP Section	Table or Figure
A. The Plan identifies how conservation actions address identified threats to species of greatest conservation need and their habitats.	Chapter 4 Appendix 3 Appendix 4 Species Profiles Key Habitat Profiles <i>Community Wildlife Conservation Guide</i>	
B. The Plan describes conservation actions sufficiently to guide implementation of those actions through the development and execution of specific projects and programs.	Chapter 4 Appendix 4 Species Profiles Key Habitat Profiles <i>Community Wildlife Conservation Guide</i>	
C. The Plan links conservation actions to objectives and indicators that will facilitate monitoring and performance measurement of those conservation actions (outlined in Element #5).	Chapter 4 Chapter 5 Appendix 4 Species Profiles Key Habitat Profiles	
D. The Plan describes conservation actions (where relevant to the state's species and habitats) that could be addressed by Federal agencies or regional, national or international partners and shared with other states.	Chapter 4 Chapter 7 Appendix 4 Appendix 7a Species Profiles Key Habitat Profiles <i>Community Wildlife Conservation Guide</i>	Table 7.3 Table 7.4
E. If available information is insufficient to describe needed conservation actions, the Plan identifies research or survey needs for obtaining information to develop specific conservation actions.	Chapter 4 Appendix 4 Species Profiles Key Habitat Profiles	Table 1.8 Table 5.2 Table 5.3
F. The Plan identifies the relative priority of conservation actions.	Chapter 4 Appendix 4 Species Profiles Key Habitat Profiles	Figure 4.1 Figure 4.9 Figure 4.10 Figure 4.11 Figure 4.12

RHODE ISLAND WAP ELEMENT GUIDE AND CHANGE LOG

Chapter 4 presents hundreds of individual inventory/research/monitoring needs and conservation actions. An updated and expanded process was conducted to identify those conservation actions that would best address the threats and problems identified in Chapter 3 and protect the SGCN and key habitats discussed in Chapters 1 and 2 respectively. Where information was insufficient to identify conservation actions, the process focused on identifying research, inventory, and monitoring needs to obtain such missing information, identifying priorities and tangible products to fill these information gaps. Emerging issues can be addressed in this way. Involving key partners and stakeholders in identifying and prioritizing conservation actions was key for creating a WAP that can be implemented by federal, state and local governments, non-governmental organizations, universities and other partners.

The process of identifying actions began with reviewing the 2005 CWCS and finding updated actions through a comprehensive review of existing international, national, regional, state, and local conservation and management plans (Appendix 1a). Once these actions were compiled, they were reviewed by the RI WAP Technical Team. Actions were refined by the Technical Team and Scientific Review Team through a series of workshops and further consultation with staff. This allowed tax experts and partners to develop a draft list of priority actions that most effectively addressed the identified high priority threats and captured the priorities repeated in partners' plans. Partners and stakeholders were all engaged in prioritizing actions for this revision.

For this revision, actions were organized by standard classification system (IUCN/TRACS), and used as a foundational reference to develop a matrix of actions that addressed each threat identified for Rhode Island's target species and habitats. Actions were developed for the highest priority threats identified. This served as the first order of prioritization. Each action developed was also assigned a rank of 1-3 (1=Low, 2=Moderate, and 3=High). The NE Lexicon action criteria (drafted at the time RI WAP actions were ranked) were considered when the Expert Taxa and Habitat teams were ranking threats and actions. They applied the lexicon criteria to represent the degree of urgency and likelihood of success in the priority rank for each SGCN and habitat actions. These scores were summed for relative priority scores for each action.

All actions presented in this document are considered important. Those actions that have a greater conservation effect across taxa and habitats were considered high priority and are presented first as statewide, overarching actions (Tier 1). These include supporting implementation of regional needs and priorities, especially those identified by the RCN program. The broader taxa level actions that address a broader suite of species and habitats present the next level of priority (Tier 2). The finer filter habitat and species level priority actions are then presented under each specific habitat within the habitat section (Tier 3). Individual habitat or community lists were generated (Tier 3) where additional specific actions were deemed necessary for that community (summarized in Key Habitat Profiles). Tier 4 actions are even more specific and contains actions that are necessary for one or at most a small cluster of wildlife species. Examples of Tier 4 actions might include nest-box programs for nesting birds or a focused survey and educational program for Chimney Swifts. Regional SGCN are highlighted here.

Whenever possible, focal species were identified to help further target conservation action development. This was particularly true for invertebrates and birds, as they were grouped into habitat or species groupings (i.e. pitch pine moths, or forest birds). They shared the same habitat, threats and actions, so

RHODE ISLAND WAP ELEMENT GUIDE AND CHANGE LOG

they were grouped together to avoid redundancy and highlight the interrelationships and similarities. This was also true with aquatic taxa, especially marine, where focal species were identified to represent guilds or groups of species with similar needs (i.e. anadromous, demersal, etc.). Species groupings and focal species (indicative species chosen to represent a group of species/taxa) were selected using additional criteria based upon the degree of (indigenous) use of key habitats (i.e. of Narragansett Bay and Rhode Island's coastal waters by all life stages) as well as their management and protection status. Conservation actions developed for these focal species would then address the wider array of other species in that same habitat (see Species Profiles).

A compiled list of all actions is presented in Appendix 4 with their performance measure. It is important to recognize that, in order to avoid redundancy, this RI WAP plan is organized so that threats and conservation actions are placed in only one tier and presented once, generally at the broadest level. For example, if land acquisition has relevance for all species and in all areas of the state, then it is not repeated (it is implied) in each habitat summary and is presented at the statewide level. Similarly, those habitat generalists, say to all forest types, will only appear once in the general habitat category and are implied throughout each specific forested key habitat. Actions are presented in a format to demonstrate the approach and links from threat to associated action (Appendix 4) and present the list of statewide, taxa and habitat actions that apply to each habitat in priority order with performance measures (Element 5).

RHODE ISLAND WAP ELEMENT GUIDE AND CHANGE LOG

Element Number 5. Descriptions of the proposed plans for monitoring species identified in the 1st element and their habitats, for monitoring the effectiveness of the conservation actions proposed in the 4th element, and for adapting these conservation actions to respond appropriately to new information or changing conditions.

Element 5 Sub-elements	WAP Section	Table or Figure
A. The Plan describes plans for monitoring species identified in Element #1, and their habitats.	Chapter 5 Chapter 4 Appendix 5 Species Profiles Key Habitat Profiles	Table 5.1
B. The Plan describes how the outcomes of the conservation actions will be monitored.	Chapter 5 Chapter 4 Appendix 4	Table 5.1 Figure 5.1
C. If monitoring is not identified for a species or species group, the Plan explains why it is not appropriate, necessary or possible.	Chapter 5	
D. Monitoring is to be accomplished at one of several levels including individual species, guilds, or natural communities.	Chapter 5 Chapter 4 Appendix 4 Appendix 5	
E. The monitoring utilizes or builds on existing monitoring and survey systems or explains how information will be obtained to determine the effectiveness of conservation actions.	Chapter 5 Appendix 5	Table 5.1 Table 5.2 Table 5.3 Figure 5.1
F. The monitoring considers the appropriate geographic scale to evaluate the status of species or species groups and the effectiveness of conservation actions.	Chapter 5 Chapter 4 Appendix 4 Appendix 5	
G. The Plan is adaptive in that it allows for evaluating conservation actions and implementing new actions accordingly.	Chapter 5 Chapter 6	Figure 5.1 Figure 5.2

The 2015 RI WAP presents a rigorous monitoring and adaptive management framework that will be used to assess the status of SGCN and habitats as well as monitor the effectiveness of RI WAP conservation actions (Chapter 5). Rhode Island’s approach identifies existing monitoring efforts and tools currently used by RI DEM DFW or its partners to assess SGCN, key habitats and related issues, as listed in the plans and programs in Appendix 5. If monitoring is not identified for an SGCN or species group/taxa, Chapter 4 of this WAP describes monitoring actions for other species which occupy the same habitats; these recommendations are prioritized to benefit the overall habitat, community, or assemblage, including many other SGCN. In cases where not enough information exists to monitor a species or group, or for which monitoring protocols have not yet been developed, this need is documented and followed by a conservation action intended to address that information need. This is true for some taxa groups such as small mammals and invertebrate groups for which standardized protocols need to be developed, and where baseline data do not exist to form the basis of a monitoring protocol. In these cases, these overarching taxa needs are described in Chapter 1 under the appropriate taxa.

RHODE ISLAND WAP ELEMENT GUIDE AND CHANGE LOG

A major improvement in this chapter is a description of how the state of Rhode Island will use tools for information management and conservation planning to track the implementation and effectiveness of conservation actions at the appropriate geographic scale. These innovative tools include the Northeast Regional Monitoring and Performance Reporting Framework, the State Wildlife Grants Effectiveness Measures Project, the Northeast Lexicon Project, and the national Wildlife Tracking and Reporting Actions for the Conservation of Species (TRACS) database. The framework starts with a specific conservation action, then a basic results chain is created linking the action to relevant threats, habitats and species. Next, indicators and measures are selected for each step in the chain, and monitoring data are used to track and populate those indicators. Information about the results chain, indicators, and measures will be captured in the Rhode Island WAP database. Taken together, the measurements of these indicators will provide the essential information needed for evaluating the effectiveness of conservation action. Conservation actions will be monitored and measured throughout the 10-year implementation of the RI WAP.

RHODE ISLAND WAP ELEMENT GUIDE AND CHANGE LOG

Element Number 6. Descriptions of procedures to review the Strategy/Plan at intervals not to exceed ten years.

Element 6 Sub-elements	WAP Section	Table or Figure
A. The state describes the process that will be used to review the Plan within the next 10 years.	Chapter 6	Table 6.1

Chapter 6 describes the process and the timeframe by which Rhode Island’s WAP will be reviewed and updated. Full revision will be completed in ten years (2025). Interim sections will be reviewed and revised throughout the ten-year period. The goal is to keep the document as up-to-date as possible. As gaps in the data that exists in 2015 are filled, new ones will be identified. Knowledge of the status of Rhode Island’s wildlife and the conditions that affect wildlife management are constantly changing. Thus, the current WAP is seen as a dynamic document.

This chapter also describes the review process and presents a schedule for the review of other conservation and management plans and identifies the agencies responsible. Information from the review of these plans will inform the ongoing review of the Rhode Island WAP. Evaluation of the conservation actions recommended in this document will be continuous as new information becomes available. Annual measures for reporting accomplishments are conducted through TRACS and Federal Aid project reporting.

RHODE ISLAND WAP ELEMENT GUIDE AND CHANGE LOG

Element Number 7. Descriptions of the plans for coordinating, to the extent feasible, the development, implementation, review, and revision of the Plan-Strategy with Federal, State, and local agencies and Indian tribes that manage significant land and water areas within the State or administer programs that significantly affect the conservation of identified species and habitats.

Element 7 Sub-elements	WAP Section	Table or Figure
A. The state describes the extent of its coordination with and efforts to involve Federal, state and local agencies, and Indian Tribes in the development of its Plan.	Chapter 7 Appendix 7a Appendix 7b Appendix 7c Appendix 7d Appendix 7e Appendix 7f	Table 7.1 Table 7.2 Table 7.4
B. The state describes its continued coordination with these agencies and tribes in the implementation, review and revision of its Plan.	Chapter 4 Chapter 6 Chapter 7 Appendix 4 Appendix 7a Appendix 7b Appendix 7e	Table 6.1

Chapter 7 describes extensive coordination with federal, state and local agencies and the Narragansett Tribe as partners in the development of the 2015 WAP and how this coordination and collaboration will continue through the next ten-year cycle. Opportunities to use existing partnerships and create new ones to help implement the WAP are also described in this chapter. Members of the Planning, Technical, Scientific Review, and Habitat Mapping/GIS teams are identified. The following appendices are included: 7a describes the framework for RI DEM and major partners, 7b describes the RI WAP process development plan with key timeframes for collaboration with partners, and 7c provides a list of the partners and stakeholders involved throughout the planning process.

Specific techniques to be used during WAP implementation and review are similar to those identified as most effective during the WAP development stages. Partners will be informed and involved through active committee and working meetings, website updates and interaction, and by making use of existing organization meetings and newsletters. Solicitation of input and technical information from expert taxa committees as peer review and evaluation will occur to provide updates to the SGCN status review. Finally, partners will be intimately involved in the next 10-year revision of this document, as they will continue to play a major role in identifying SGCN and key habitats, as well as updating and identifying new threats and actions for the next decade of WAP implementation. This level of collaboration will ensure that the Rhode Island WAP has considerable support from federal, state and local agencies and Indian tribes in the future.

RHODE ISLAND WAP ELEMENT GUIDE AND CHANGE LOG

Element Number 8. Descriptions of the necessary public participation in the development, revision, and implementation of the Plan.

Element 8 Sub-elements	WAP Section	Table or Figure
A. The state describes the extent of its efforts to involve the public in the development of its Plan.	Chapter 7 Chapter 4 Appendix 7d Appendix 7e Appendix 7f <i>Community Wildlife Conservation Guide</i>	
B. The state describes its continued public involvement in the implementation and revision of its Plan.	Chapter 7 Chapter 4 Appendix 7e <i>Community Wildlife Conservation Guide</i>	

Chapter 7 also describes the process of public and stakeholder participation that is a key component in the development and implementation of the Rhode Island WAP. Every effort was made to communicate with stakeholders and with the public throughout the 3-year period in which the 2015 Plan was under development.

Building on the initial 2005 CWCS outreach plan, throughout the development of the 2015 WAP the Core Steering Team and Consultant engaged the public at multiple levels and at each stage of the process. Outreach efforts included magazine and newsletter articles, website updates, and a series of public presentations. Presentations were conducted at scheduled public, community, and organization meetings, primarily by the Community Liaison.

A significant improvement in this 2015 revision process was the online posting of RI WAP draft chapters and sections for months (some over 6 months) for public review. Press releases, social media, and partner and stakeholder networks and newsletters were used to solicit review and feedback on each RI WAP piece. Open, participatory events were used to solicit additional information and input from the public at large.

Appendix 7d describes the Public Input Plan developed to guide outreach to these publics. This Plan was used as an example in the Northeast Lexicon to help guide the 13 northeastern states in developing consistent, coordinated approaches for public involvement. Appendix 7e provides details for the public input timeline and tracking. Appendix 7f provides example WAP outreach materials.

Similar efforts will be carried forward throughout the WAP’s 10-year implementation period. Increased public awareness will result in greater public involvement, buy-in, and participation, leading to improved coordination opportunities as well as new mechanisms to incorporate in the 2025 RI WAP revision.

RHODE ISLAND WAP ELEMENT GUIDE AND CHANGE LOG

Throughout the next decade, scheduled public events and meetings will occur regularly, to provide coordination and outreach opportunities, exchange information, and deliver updates on the progress of WAP targets and implementation through RI DEM, The Nature Conservancy of Rhode Island, URI, RINHS and other key partners. This level of public outreach will ensure that Rhode Island has considerable support for the RI WAP in the future.