National Advisory Acceptance Team (NAAT) Review
Reference Guide for the Members

Congress identified eight required elements for a state Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy, with the expectation that "species in greatest need of conservation" will be identified, while addressing the full array of wildlife and wildlife-related issues.

The NAAT believes it must make an affirmative finding that all of the eight required elements are satisfactorily fulfilled in order for an "approval" recommendation to be made to the Director of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Director). Strategy reviews will first occur at the regional level, by NAAT member-teams, prior to full discussion and voting by the entire NAAT.

Below follows a template the NAAT will use as it reviews the Strategies. There are eight major topic headings which correspond to the eight elements prescribed by Congress. Under each element heading is a series of statements to help NAAT members think about whether or not the requirements of a particular element have been satisfactorily addressed. These statements, in effect, are examples of what the NAAT expects may be helpful in evaluating the merits of a Strategy. Strategy authors may want to offer additional reasons or factors as to why they believe they satisfactorily meet the requirements of a particular element, above or beyond the examples provided.

The NAAT is making this template available to the States and Territories with the assumption it will offer Strategy authors some measure of basic guidance about what types of information should be found in a Strategy in order to provide for an approval outcome for any given element. In addition, the NAAT trusts this level of detailed guidance will help to assure all stakeholders of the forethought given to the review process - - one which is intended to provide for a high level of integrity and consistency in making recommendations to the Director.

The NAAT expects that Strategies will describe or identify sources of information, as well as critical information gaps, and plans for acquiring critical information for species in greatest need of conservation. The NAAT will consult the "Guiding Principles" developed by the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies when reviewing the Strategies. While this guide includes language regarding expectations that sections of the Strategies will provide sufficient information, the NAAT has not described or quantified the level of information expected as each State or Territory will have different levels and sources of information available. The NAAT generally expects that Strategies will provide clear explanations of how information was used to reach conclusions. Strategies should explicitly draw logical connections between the problems that affect priority species and habitats, the conservation actions proposed to address those problems, and the indicators and monitoring approaches that will be used to measure the success of the conservation strategy.

It is anticipated that the Strategy will include an executive summary, synopsis or appendix that highlights where in the document reviewers can find information about each of the elements.

☐Yes ☐No **1st Element. 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.**

A. The Strategy indicates sources of information (e.g., literature, data bases, agencies, individuals) on wildlife abundance and distribution consulted during the planning process.

B. The Strategy 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.

C. The Strategy identifies low and declining populations to the extent data are available.

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 Strategy revision.

E. The Strategy describes the process used to select the species in greatest need of conservation. The quantity of information in the Strategy is determined by the State with input from its partners, based on what is available to the State.

☐Yes ☐No **2nd Element. Descriptions of locations and relative condition of key habitats and community types essential to conservation of species identified in the 1st element.**

A. The Strategy provides a reasonable explanation for the level of detail provided; if insufficient, the Strategy identifies the types of future actions that will be taken to obtain the information.

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.

☐Yes ☐No **3rd Element. 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.**

A. The Strategy indicates sources of information (e.g., literature, databases, agencies, or individuals) used to determine the problems or threats.

B. The threats/problems are described in sufficient detail to develop focused conservation actions (for example, "increased highway mortalities" or "acid mine drainage" rather than generic descriptions such as "development" or "poor water quality").

C. The Strategy considers threats/problems, regardless of their origins (local, State, regional, national and international), where relevant to the State's species and habitats.

D. If available information is insufficient to describe threats/problems, research and survey efforts are identified to obtain needed information.

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 Strategy is approved.

☐Yes ☐No **4th Element. Descriptions of conservation actions determined to be necessary to conserve the identified species and habitats and priorities for implementing such actions.**

A. The Strategy identifies how conservation actions address identified threats to species of greatest conservation need and their habitats.

B. The Strategy describes conservation actions sufficiently to guide implementation of those actions through the development and execution of specific projects and programs.

C. The Strategy links conservation actions to objectives and indicators that will facilitate monitoring and performance measurement of those conservation actions (outlined in Element #5).

D. The Strategy 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.

E. If available information is insufficient to describe needed conservation actions, the Strategy identifies research or survey needs for obtaining information to develop specific conservation actions.

F. The Strategy identifies the relative priority of conservation actions.

☐Yes ☐No **5th Element. 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**

A. The Strategy describes plans for monitoring species identified in Element #1, and their habitats.

B. The Strategy describes how the outcomes of the conservation actions will be monitored.

C. If monitoring is not identified for a species or species group, the Strategy explains why it is not appropriate, necessary or possible.

D. Monitoring is to be accomplished at one of several levels including individual species, guilds, or natural communities.

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.

F. The monitoring considers the appropriate geographic scale to evaluate the status of species or species groups and the effectiveness of conservation actions.

G. The Strategy is adaptive in that it allows for evaluating conservation actions and implementing new actions accordingly.

☐Yes ☐No **6th Element. Descriptions of procedures to review the Strategy/Plan at intervals not to exceed ten years.**

A. The State describes the process that will be used to review the Strategy within the next ten years.

☐Yes ☐No **7th Element. 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**

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 Strategy.

B. The State describes its continued coordination with these agencies and tribes in the implementation, review and revision of its Strategy.

☐Yes ☐No **8th Element. Descriptions of the necessary public participation in the development, revision, and implementation of the Plan.**

A. The State describes the extent of its efforts to involve the public in the development of its Strategy.

B. The State describes its continued public involvement in the implementation and revision of its Strategy.

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