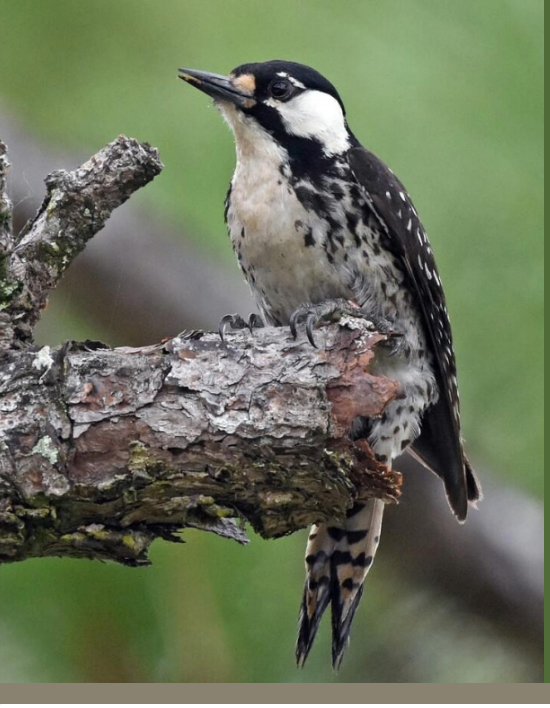


2025-2035

ALABAMA

State Wildlife Action Plan



CHAPTER 6

OUTREACH



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ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES | DIVISION OF WILDLIFE AND FRESHWATER FISHERIES

CHAPTER 6
OUTREACH

Introduction

Elements 7 and **8** of Alabama's SWAP address the importance of broad public participation and regular plan review in achieving long term conservation success. Effective conservation depends not only on sound science but also on meaningful input from partners, stakeholders, and the public, ensuring that the SWAP reflects shared priorities and practical approaches. By engaging a broad audience and maintaining a commitment to adaptive management, Alabama's SWAP remains a living document, one that evolves with changing conditions while continuing to guide efforts to conserve the state's natural resources.

Equally important is the requirement to evaluate and update the SWAP at least once every ten years (**Element 6**), incorporating new data, emerging threats, and lessons learned from past implementation. The USFWS requires establishment of procedures to review the SWAP at intervals not to exceed ten years. WFF, and the conservation community, will conduct a comprehensive review of this Plan, and submit to the USFWS for review by September 30, 2035. To adequately prepare for this 10-year revision, WFF will sponsor workshops and symposia as needed and utilize this extensive scientific review and update of SGCN, key habitats, and conservation actions as the foundation for the next SWAP. Committing to such a significant effort indicates that WFF will continue to involve its many conservation partners and interested stakeholders in SWAP development.

Starting in 2023, WFF began the planning process for the 2025 SWAP revision. Building on the initial 2015 SWAP outreach plan, WFF coordinated with federal, tribal, state, and local partners and stakeholders throughout the development of the 2025 SWAP. This Chapter discusses coordination, the involvement of the public, and plans to continue working with each as the SWAP is implemented and adaptively managed over the next decade. WFF and its partners worked with taxa experts and other key stakeholders throughout the state to revise the SWAP. Species rankings, habitat conditions, threats, and conservation actions were reviewed by experts across the state.

SWAP Organizational Structure

For the 2025 comprehensive review WFF established a SWAP Development Team (Table 1.1). The SWAP Development Team identified the taxonomic groups to be included in the review: amphibians, reptiles, birds, mammals, crayfish, fish, mussels, snails, and vascular plants, then appointed a Taxa Team Leader for each group. These leaders assembled expert collaborators to form their respective Taxa Teams (Table 1.1). In addition, Auburn University (AU) was contracted to support the revision process, developing a comprehensive SWAP database to assist with the SGCN ranking process, and reviewing and updating CPAs.

Taxa Team Structure

Once Taxa Teams were formed, each team expert was requested to review and complete a questionnaire for species within their respective taxa prior to in-person Taxa Team meetings. Survey questions included:

1. Is this species the subject of recent or forthcoming taxonomic revision?
2. Do you recommend designating this as a 2025 SGCN species?
3. How many populations of this species are you aware of?
4. What is the population size for this species?
5. What is the habitat vulnerability of this species?
6. What is the short-term trend for this species?
7. What is the long-term trend for this species?
8. What do you see as the biggest threat to this species?
9. What are some other threats to this species?
10. What is the species' intrinsic vulnerability?
11. What are the overall impacts of threats on this species/ viability?
12. What ecoregion does this species occur?
13. What is the coarse habitat for this species?
14. What are the species' habitat needs?
15. What SGCN Tier do you recommend for this species?
16. What is the number one management or conservation action for this species?

Responses were summarized for each taxa and presented through a dashboard at each in-person Taxa Team meeting (Table 6.1). During Taxa Team meetings, database responses were reviewed and discussed to make determinations for SWAP Elements 1-5 (Chapters 1-5). Results were compiled and posted for public review and input beginning in winter 2024 on the ADCNR website www.outdooralabama.com. Throughout 2024 and 2025, meetings were held with Taxa Teams, and other experts, to review SWAP development.

Table 6.1 In-person Taxa Team coordination meetings, dates, and locations.

TAXA TEAM	DATE	LOCATION
Freshwater Snails	January 17, 2024	Alabama Wildlife Federation, Millbrook, AL
Mussels	January 18, 2024	Alabama Wildlife Federation, Millbrook, AL
Crayfish	January 19, 2024	Alabama Wildlife Federation, Millbrook, AL
Mammals	January 23, 2024	Montgomery, AL Headquarters Office
Birds	January 30, 2024	Pike County Lake, Troy, AL
Amphibians and Reptiles	February 6-7, 2024	Pike County Lake, Troy, AL
Fish	March 21, 2024	Pike County Lake, Troy, AL
Vascular Plants	July 11, 2024	Aldridge Gardens, Hoover, AL

Coordination with Federal, State, Local and Tribal Partners and Stakeholders

Partners and stakeholders were included in each major phase of the SWAP through in-person meetings, video conferences, social media, emails, and phone calls (**Element 7**). Meetings were held with local, state, federal, and tribal partners around the state to encourage detailed and meaningful input during each step. Initial meetings were held to inform partners of the SWAP revision and solicit input on the process and recommendations for identifying SGCN and key habitats (Table 6.2). Follow up correspondence occurred on a regular basis throughout 2024 and 2025 to exchange technical information and provide updates to various stakeholders as part of a coordinated approach to conservation in Alabama.

Table 6.2 State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) stakeholder outreach meetings.

STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS	DATE	LOCATION
University of South Alabama	June 19, 2024	Virtual
Alabama Plant Conservation Alliance	July 11, 2024	Hoover, AL
Band of Poarch Creek Indians	July 16, 2024	Atmore, AL
Alabama Chapter Partners for Amphibian and Reptile Conservation	October 4, 2024	Midway, AL
Alabama Plant Conservation Alliance	December 6, 2024	Midway, AL
2025 Alabama Mollusk and Crayfish Working Group	January 21-22, 2025	Millbrook, AL
Alabama Rivers & Streams Network	January 23-24, 2025	Millbrook, AL
American Fisheries Society, Alabama Chapter	February 5, 2025	Nauvoo, AL
2025 Wildlife Diversity Program Managers Annual Meeting	February 10-14, 2025	Guntersville, AL
Southeast Partners for Amphibian and Reptile Conservation	March 13, 2025	Guntersville, AL
SWAP Bird Meeting	April 24, 2025	Midway, AL
Alabama Plant Conservation Alliance	June 20, 2025	Theodore, AL
Alabama Sustainable Forestry Initiative Implementation Committee	August 28, 2025	Montgomery, AL

A primary objective agreed upon by stakeholders and partners was to integrate the results of the SWAP revision into their plans developed over the next 10 years. This step was taken to ensure that there would be maximum SWAP coordination, implementation and buy-in by stakeholders and partners for the next decade. An example of how this will maximize SWAP effectiveness and implementation by partners can be found in the *National Forests in Alabama - Resource and Management Plan*. This document integrates Alabama wildlife priority species (including the SWAP SGCN) and their conservation actions into the 10-year management plan. This step significantly adds to the input process, as the National Forest plans employ a formal public input process and comment period and are regularly reviewed and revised (USDA FS, 2015).

In the same manner, federal partners including USFWS Ecological Services staff were asked to incorporate SGCN and key habitat conservation targets identified in the SWAP into their programs and plans. Similarly, other key federal partners including Mobile Bay National Estuary Program (NEP), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), and TVA, were all contacted early in the SWAP process and asked to incorporate SWAP targets into their programs and plans. Especially relevant and promising was the synergy and opportunities between SWAP targets and NRCS Farm Bill programs.

Coordination with the federally recognized Poarch Band of Creek Indians included correspondence and meetings to share information and literature about SWAP, SWAP revision, CPAs, SWG programs, both state and tribal, as well as associated funding opportunities. These efforts featured presentations on relevant state and federal initiatives that could support the Tribe's short and long term wildlife conservation goals, benefiting SGCN, and their habitats. Alabama has eight state-recognized Tribal Nations: Cherokee Tribe of Northeast Alabama, Cherokees of Southeast Alabama, Echota Cherokee Tribe of Alabama, Machis Lower Creek Indian Tribe, Mowa Band of Choctaw Indians, Piqua Sept of Ohio Shawnee, Star Clan of Muscogee Creeks, and United Cherokee Ani-Yun-Wiya Nation. As opportunities arise during SWAP implementation, WFF will collaborate with these Tribes on joint conservation projects. WFF supports ongoing coordination and long term planning for its implementation on Tribal lands.

Coordination with ADCNR's Marine Resources Division (MRD) included correspondence and an invitation to participate in the SWAP revision. While MRD did not provide feedback on the SWAP revision, WFF will coordinate with MRD and collaborate on conservation projects as needed in regards to those marine mammals and reptiles that were included in the SWAP revision.

Local, state and federal agencies, tribal partners, and other stakeholders were invited to review draft SWAP sections and chapters for each element throughout the development process, and their feedback was incorporated into both draft and final documents. A key measure of coordination and implementation success will be the extent to which these partners and stakeholders integrate SGCN, habitats, and conservation actions into their own plans and programs. An early example of this integration was the USFS incorporating SGCN and associated habitats into its Revised Land and Resource Management Plan. Other examples include The Nature Conservancy (TNC) requesting a joint planning process to align its strategies with the SWAP and the USFWS integrating SWAP priorities, objectives, and strategies into National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plans (CCPs). To support continued collaboration and ensure SWAP implementation over the next decade, each stakeholder and partner will receive a final copy of this SWAP, along with a request to incorporate SGCN and habitats into their conservation plans and implement relevant conservation actions as identified in this document. Annual planning meetings with

stakeholders will provide opportunities to review, discuss, and track progress on SWAP and partner actions.

Public Outreach

In November of 2024, outreach efforts focused on informing and engaging stakeholders, partner collaborators, and the general public in the SWAP process. A variety of outreach techniques were employed to maximize input across stakeholder tiers, including personal contacts and correspondence, meetings, advisory groups, press releases, presentations, magazine articles, newsletters, and interactive website, and social media platforms (**Element 8**, Appendix 10). WFF's media releases reach approximately 36,437 outlets for press releases, 40,022 outlets for wildlife and conservation news, 243,168 contacts for the ADCNR Outdoor Alabama Newsletter, 21 television stations, 60,000 followers for the ADCNR Outdoor Alabama Facebook page, and 115,000 followers for the WFF Facebook page. Information on relevant priority species, habitats, and conservation actions from existing programs was gathered, compiled, and incorporated into the SWAP. Stakeholders were specifically invited to confirm and update this information throughout the development period. Follow up meetings, phone calls, emails, website updates, and Facebook posts kept participants informed of progress and solicited feedback at each major stage and when draft materials were available. Feedback was provided to the SWAP Coordinator, who was the primary point of contact for all SWAP correspondence, and WFF Nongame Section staff members through emails, phone calls, mail, and during SWAP virtual and in-person meetings. WFF logged all SWAP revision meetings, social media posts, news releases, and public comments. These detailed records are available upon request.

The completed SWAP document was posted on the ADCNR webpage on September 16, 2025, for public review. An ADCNR Conservation News release advertised this review period, and comments were accepted until September 29, 2025. Comments included updating forestry sections, updating SGCN range maps to different colors, and landowner involvement to improve their land for SGCN. WFF worked with the Alabama Forestry Association, AFC, and other forest industry partners to update forestry language regarding threats and conservation actions. WFF SWAP Development Team assessed all additional comments received and updated components of the Plan as needed.

Moving forward, WFF will continue to oversee SWAP implementation and share updates with private organizations, individuals, public agencies, and tribal partners. Regular meetings will provide forums to monitor and discuss the status of SWAP implementation with stakeholders. Additionally, the ADCNR website and social media channels will keep the general public informed and encourage wise stewardship.