

## 7. Priority Conservation Issues and Actions

The Conservation Issues and Actions in Section 6 have not been subjected to formal strategic planning to determine their priority; the need for such a process is in fact one of the proposed actions. However, much has been written over the years about the many issues that impact Delaware's natural resources. A careful reading of these reports and plans – Whole Basin Management reports, The Nature Conservancy's ecoregional plans, Natural Heritage Program documents, the Environmental Law Institute's reports, Delaware Invasive Species Management Plan, and others – coupled with the analysis contained in this Plan, provides a picture of the most important Conservation Issues and Actions, listed below.

### Issue Type: Division Operations

**Specific Issue: DFW funding, staffing, administrative structure and/or procedures for DEWAP implementation**

- **Action:** Integrate SGCN and Key Wildlife Habitat conservation into DFW responsibilities so as to merge game, sportfish, non-game and endangered species management. Fully fund and staff responsibilities for data collection and information management; natural resource management planning; monitoring and adaptive management; research; coordination of partnerships; and education, outreach and enforcement.

### Issue Type: Natural Resource Management Planning

**Specific Issue: Conservation planning process**

- **Action:** Develop a strategic planning process to “step down” DEWAP into prioritized management prescriptions for SGCN, key habitats, and resolution of “direct threat” conservation issues on public and private lands. Include all relevant conservation actions from existing national, regional, state and site plans. Incorporate information and actions from these prescriptions into resource management plans as appropriate.

**Specific Issue: Baseline Information**

- **Action:** Conduct surveys to more fully document the current distribution and status of SGCN, especially in Key Wildlife Habitats, and the current distribution and condition of key habitats (this is a combination of two separate actions in Section 6.4).

### Issue Type: Monitoring and Adaptive Management

**Specific Issue: Monitoring of SGCN, key habitats, impacts from conservation issues and outcomes of conservation actions**

- **Action:** Develop standardized monitoring protocols that incorporate existing state, regional and national monitoring schemes where they exist, and include these protocols in all conservation programs and projects.

**Specific Issue: Quantitative measures of success for assessing DEWAP implementation**

- **Action:** Develop performance indicators that measure the success of conservation actions for SGCN, key habitats, abatement of “direct threat” conservation issues and resolution of “indirect threat” conservation issue. (this is a combination of three separate actions in Section 6.4).

## Delaware Wildlife Action Plan

### ***Specific Issue: Adaptive management framework for modifying conservation actions***

- **Action:** Create an adaptive management framework that utilizes monitoring to adapt planning and implementation of conservation actions to account for unsatisfactory results, changing conditions and new information.

### **Issue Type: Private Lands Conservation**

#### ***Specific Issue: Incentives for landowners***

- **Action:** Develop incentives for maintaining existing key habitats or SGCN on private lands (as opposed to current incentives for restoring key habitats or SGCN).
- **Action:** Develop additional incentives for exceptional management of key habitats or SGCN (similar to the Conservation Security Program).

### **Issue Type: Resource Management**

#### ***Specific Issue: Habitat/Wildlife Management***

- **Action:** Analyze species and habitat management on state conservation lands – Wildlife Areas, Parks, and Forests – and adapt management as necessary to increase key habitat patch size and reduce edge effects on SGCN.

#### ***Specific Issue: Facility and Program Operations***

- **Action:** Review facility and program operations on state conservation lands – Wildlife Areas, Parks, and Forests – and develop state policies for minimizing impacts to key habitats and SGCN. Establish MOUs with DPR and the State Forest Service about consultation with DFW on issues impacting key habitats and SGCN in State Parks and State Forests.

### **Issue Type: Resource Protection**

#### ***Specific Issue: Funding for open space acquisition to protect SGCN and key habitats***

- **Action:** Provide sufficient funding for the Open Space Program to meet land acquisition objectives designated in the Green Infrastructure Natural Resources Focus Area.

### **Issue Type: Habitat Loss and Fragmentation**

#### ***Specific Issue: Residential and Commercial Structures***

- **Action:** Coordinate with partners to acquire title to, or easements on, sites that are critical to the conservation of key habitats and SGCN within the Green Infrastructure Natural Resources Focus Area, for management by public agencies or NGOs.
- **Action:** Improve federal/state/local coordination of environmental review to ensure that potential impacts to key habitats and SGCN are minimized for all major projects.

#### ***Specific Issue: Transportation Infrastructure***

- **Action:** Work with the Delaware Department of Transportation to integrate key habitat and SGCN conservation into long-range transportation planning.
- **Action:** Work with the Delaware Department of Transportation to integrate key habitat and SGCN conservation into wetland and forest mitigation.

## Delaware Wildlife Action Plan

### Issue Type: Agricultural and Forestry Operations

#### *Specific Issue: Clearcutting and Other Forestry Practices*

- **Action:** Coordinate with partners to acquire title to, or easements on, sites that are critical to the conservation of key habitats and SGCN within the Green Infrastructure Natural Resources Focus Area, for management by public agencies or NGOs.
- **Action:** Work with the Delaware Forest Service to integrate key habitat and SGCN conservation into forest management planning.

### Issue Type: Invasive Species, Nuisance Animals and Wildlife Diseases

#### *Specific Issue: Invasive Plants*

- **Action:** Work with the Delaware Invasive Species Council and conservation land managers to assess and monitor impacts of invasive plants using the Delaware Alien Plant Invasiveness Risk Assessment protocol, and prioritize control efforts based on degree of risk.
- **Action:** Work with the Delaware Invasive Species Council and conservation land managers to develop and implement adaptive management plans for control of invasive species.

### Issue Type: Recreational Activities

#### *Specific Issue: Recreational Use on Foot and with Boats, Personal Watercraft and Off-Road Vehicles*

- **Action:** Assess the impacts of ORVs on beach and dune, early successional and forested habitats, and use this assessment and long-term monitoring to adapt management as necessary.
- **Action:** Strengthen enforcement of regulations for off-road vehicles on public property to protect key habitats and SGCN.
- **Action:** Post and/or fence nesting sites, breeding concentrations or other critical areas on public property to protect SGCN, and enforce restrictions.

### Issue Type: Education and Outreach

#### *Specific Issue: Training, education and outreach programs on key habitat ecology, SGCN biology, and conservation issues and actions*

- **Action:** Provide training for state staff on key habitat ecology, SGCN biology, and conservation issues and actions.
- **Action:** Develop education and outreach for the general public, such as “profile brochures” for key habitats and SGCN, and “citizen’s guides” for issues and actions.

# Delaware Wildlife Action Plan