

Session B01

State Wildlife Action Plans: A Resource for Land Trusts

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Living Lands:

Helping Land Trusts
Conserve Biodiversity



Living Lands Mission

- To support and increase the capacity of the land trust community to conserve biodiversity on private lands through financial and technical assistance.

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Biodiversity Track at a Glance

Saturday

- A01: Conservation Planning for Biodiversity: Landscape Context and Site Design
- B01: State Wildlife Action Plans: A Resource for Land Trusts
- C01: Farming with the Wild Forever: Using Agricultural Easements to Support Biodiversity

Sunday

- D01: Funding Opportunities for Biodiversity Projects
- E01: Habitat Restoration and Management on Easements: Case Studies
- F01: Habitat Restoration and Management on Easements: Round Table

Living Lands Project: Why Now?

- Standard 8
 - Conservation value
 - Public benefits
- IRS and taxpayers need conservation donations to be worthy of a federal tax benefit
- Land trusts need to document “conservation purposes” in easement language
- Funders want strategic planning
- New State Wildlife Action Plans (AKA comprehensive wildlife conservation strategies)

Outline

- State Wildlife Grants program
- State wildlife/biodiversity planning
- State Wildlife Action Plans
- Implementation

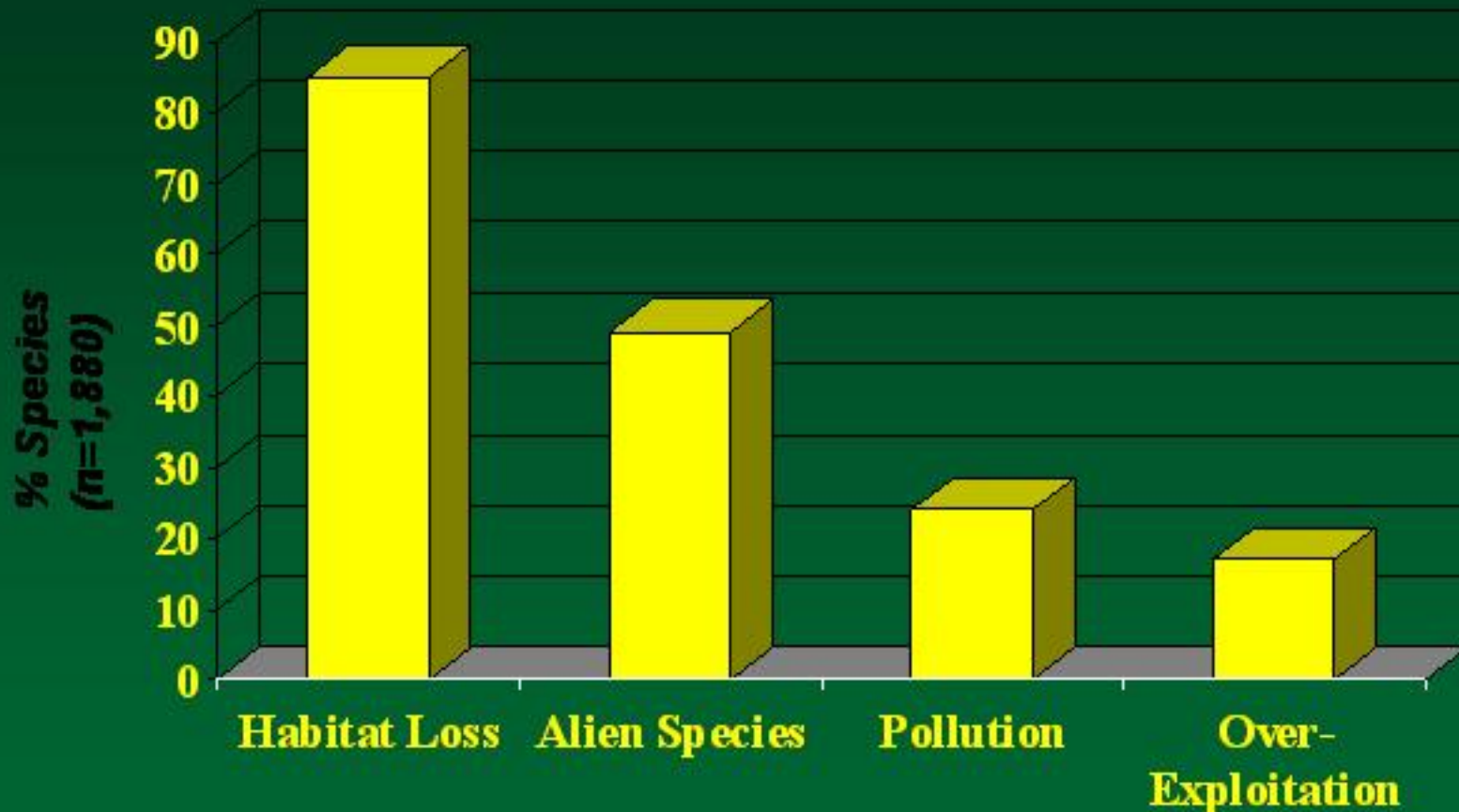
Endangered Species (1254 listed)



Species of concern (15,000+)



Habitat Loss: Leading Cause of Species Imperilment



Source: Precious Heritage, 2000

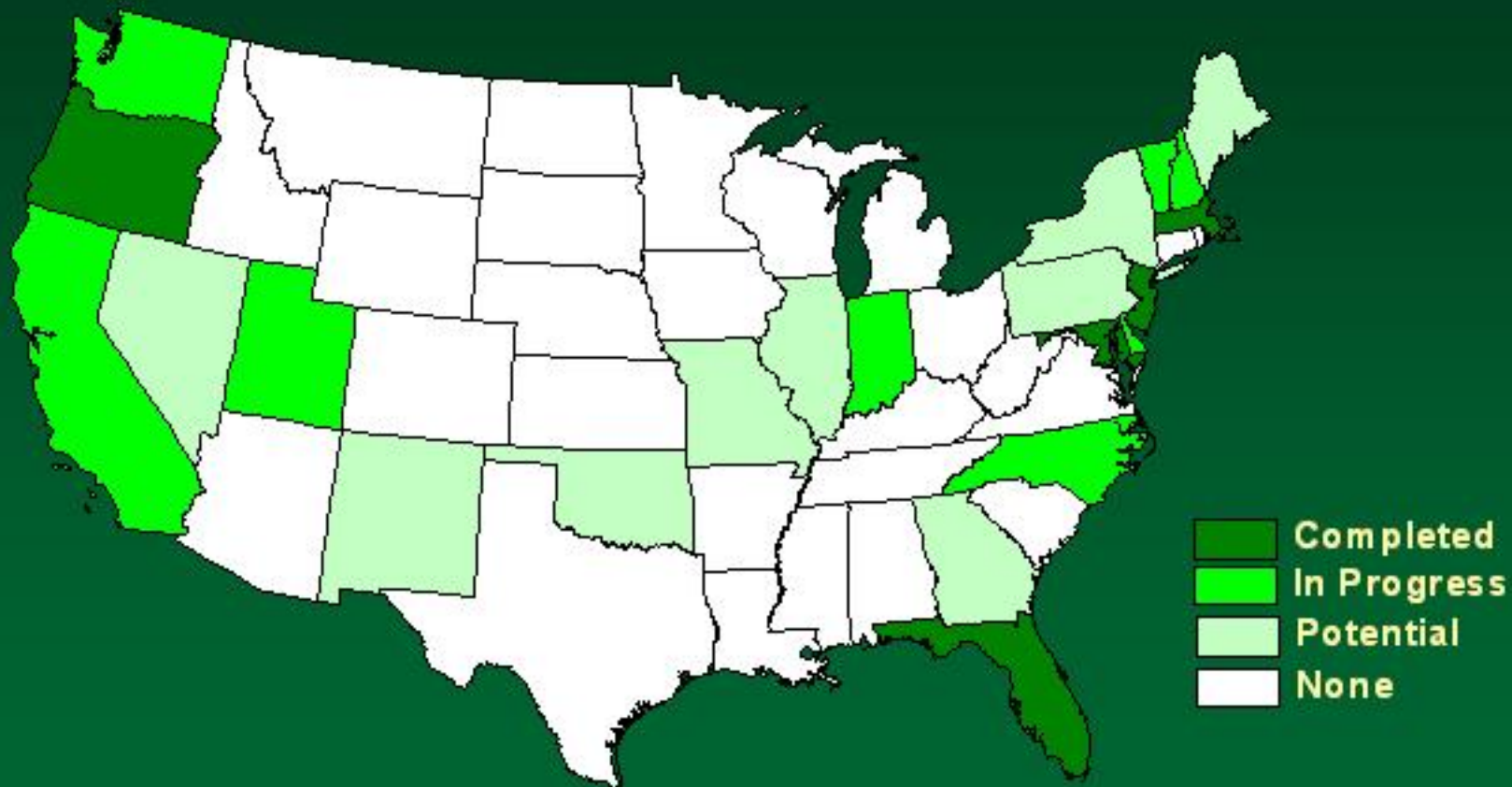
State & Tribal Wildlife Grants

- **Established in 2000 through Interior Appropriations – administered by USFWS**
- **Focus on Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) to avoid future listings**
- **Non-regulatory proactive solution**
- **State Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plans completed October 2005**
- **Defenders played leading role in establishing program**

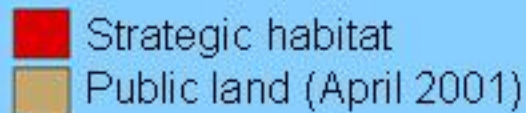
Importance of State Wildlife Grants Program

- **Conservation Planning** – Most states have never done a comprehensive wildlife plan
- **Habitat Conservation** – Habitat loss is the main problem for wildlife. Plans can map out habitat areas to conserve
- **Policy Connections** – To address habitat, plans can be used to inform land use decisions
- **Funding** – Plans can be used to inform other funded planning & conservation investments

Statewide Biodiversity Planning Status (Prior to 2000)



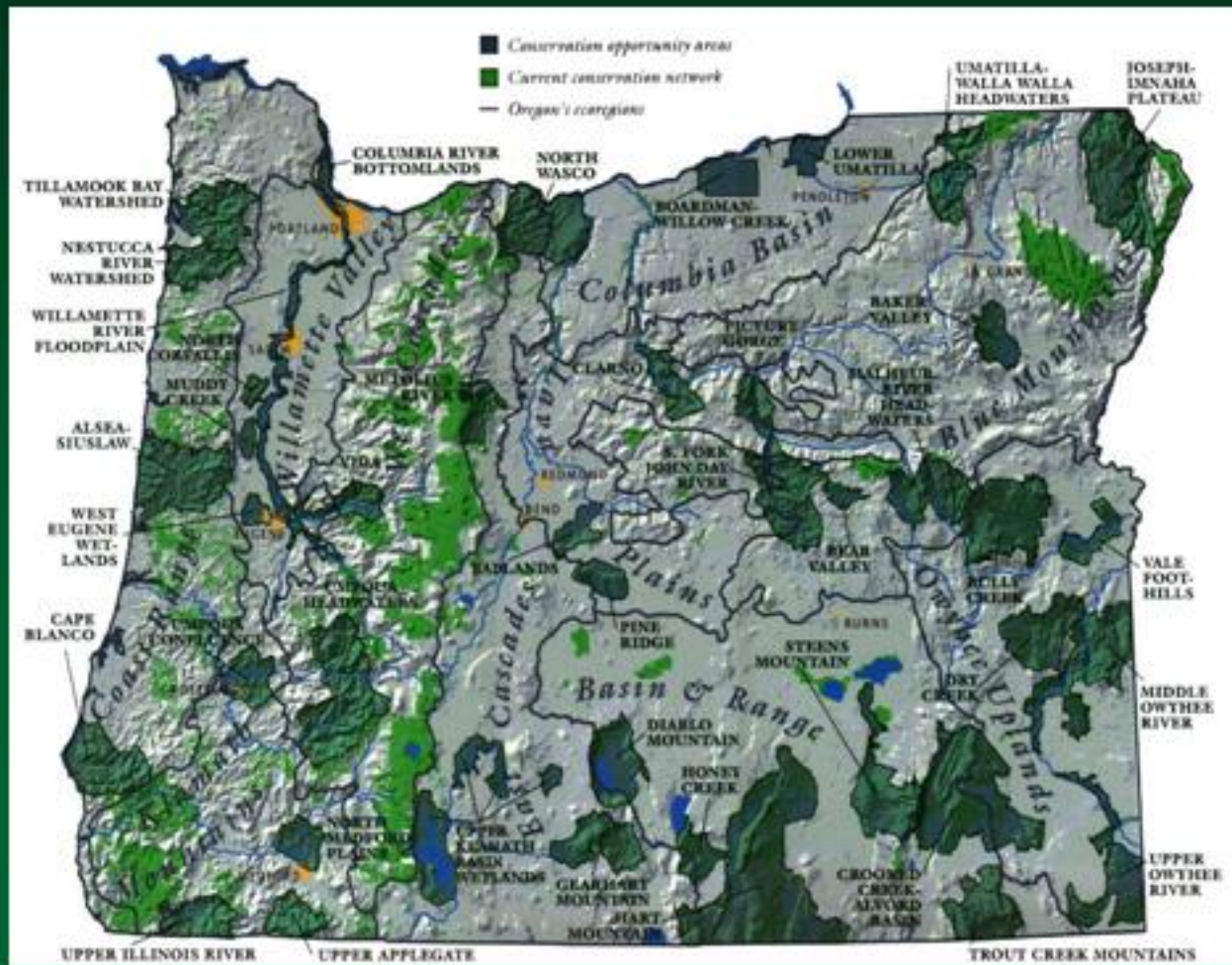
Florida Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas



Source: Cox, J. R. Kautz, M. MacLaughlin, and T. Gilbert. 1994. Closing the gaps in Florida's wildlife habitat conservation system. Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Tallahassee.



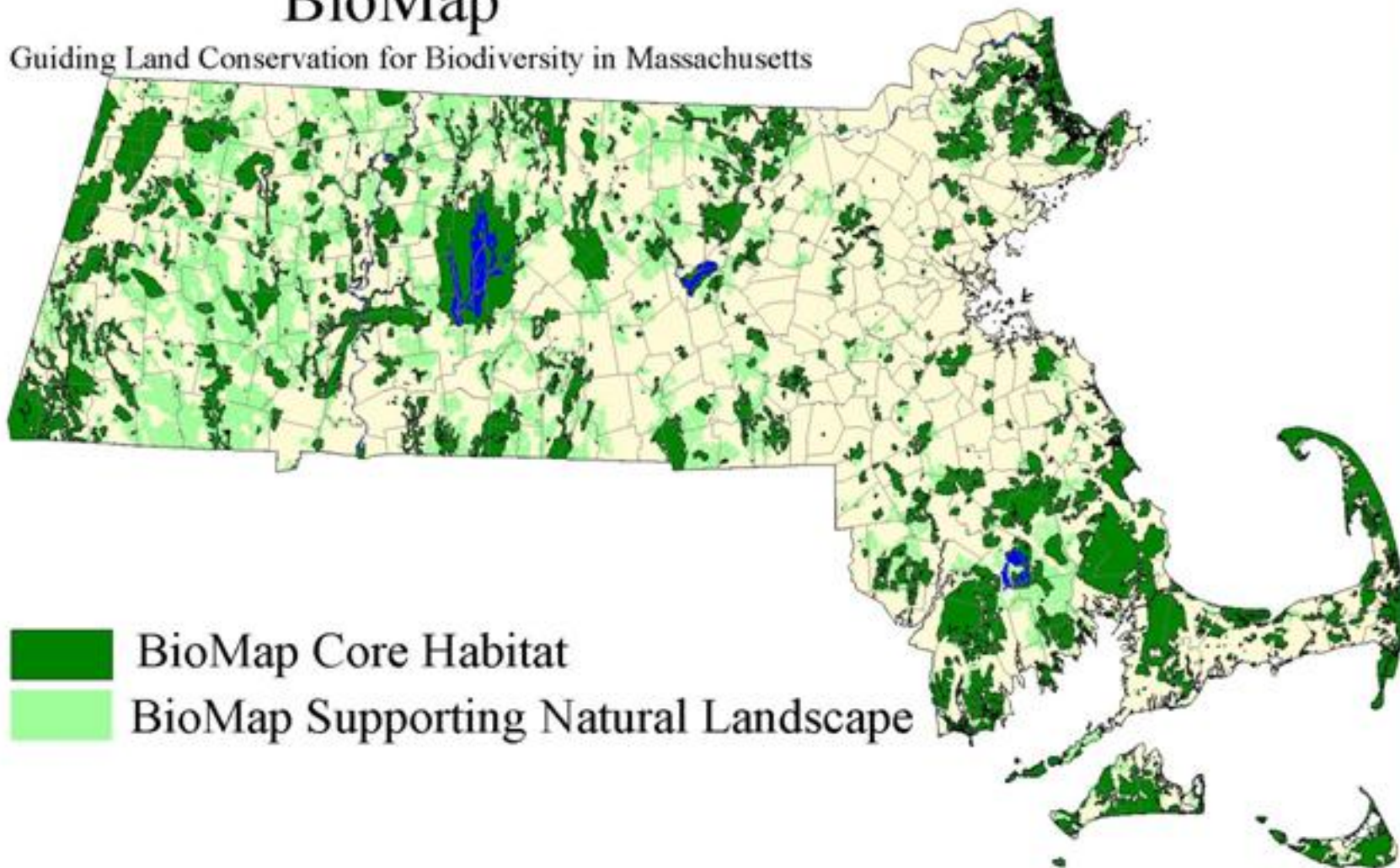
Oregon Biodiversity Project



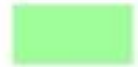
Massachusetts Biodiversity Plan

BioMap

Guiding Land Conservation for Biodiversity in Massachusetts



BioMap Core Habitat



BioMap Supporting Natural Landscape

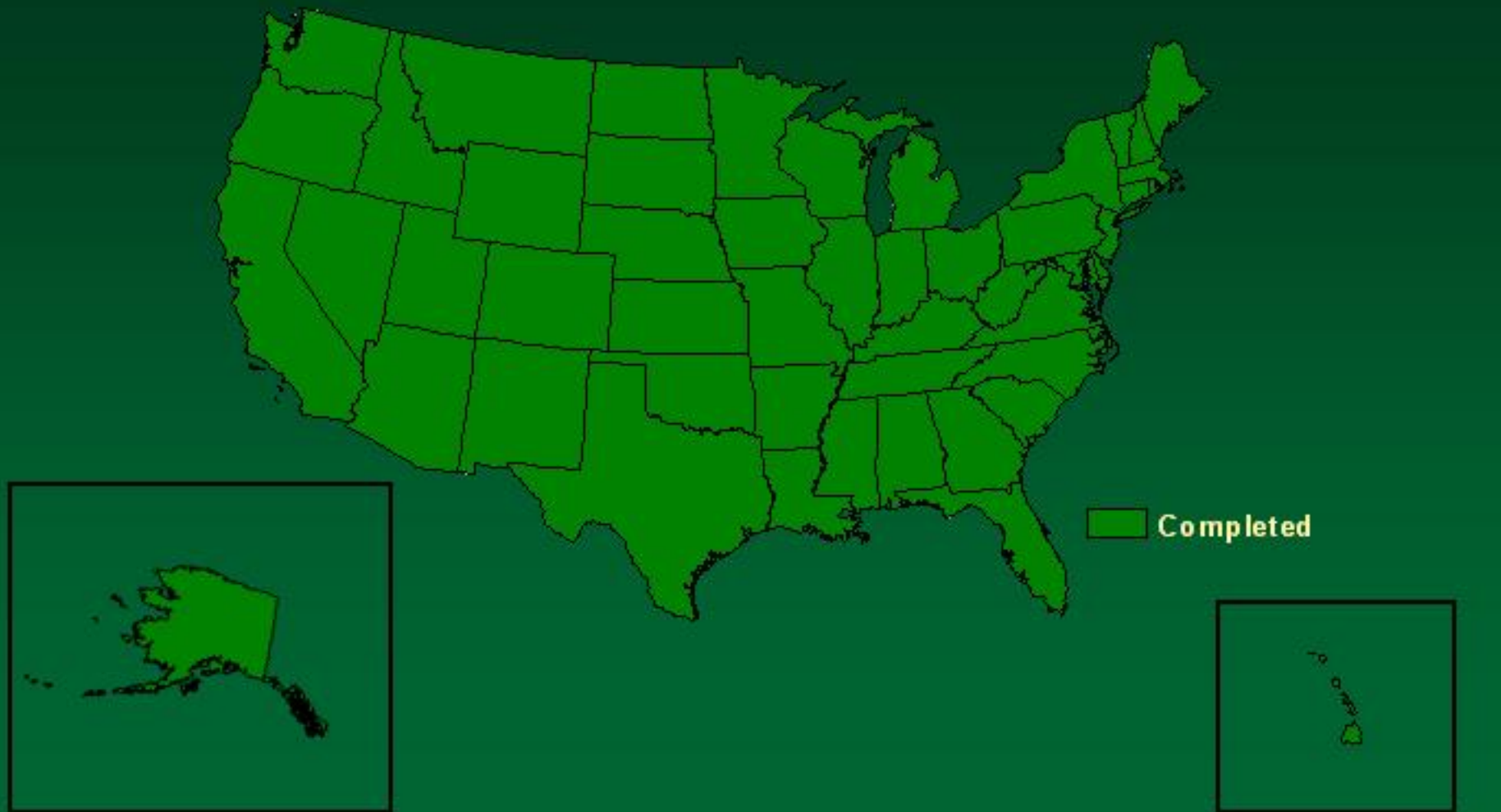
Site Selection

- Identify high priorities at landscape level:
 - Representation (types of sites)
 - Resiliency (size of sites)
 - Redundancy (number of sites)

Site Selection

- Priority areas should also consider:
 - At-risk / rare habitats
 - Habitats for multiple species, including at-risk species
 - Functioning ecosystems

State Wildlife Action Plans October 2005



Wildlife Plans Review

- Comments on Plans
- Review Criteria
- Database
- Summary of Results in “Conservation Across the Landscape: A Review of the State Wildlife Action Plans”
- Defenders Emphasis: In short, a good conservation plan will tell you what needs to be done (actions), where (maps) and in what order (prioritization)

Review Criteria

Eight Elements

- Species
- Habitat
- Threats
- Actions
- Monitoring
- Coordination
- Periodic Review
- Public Participation

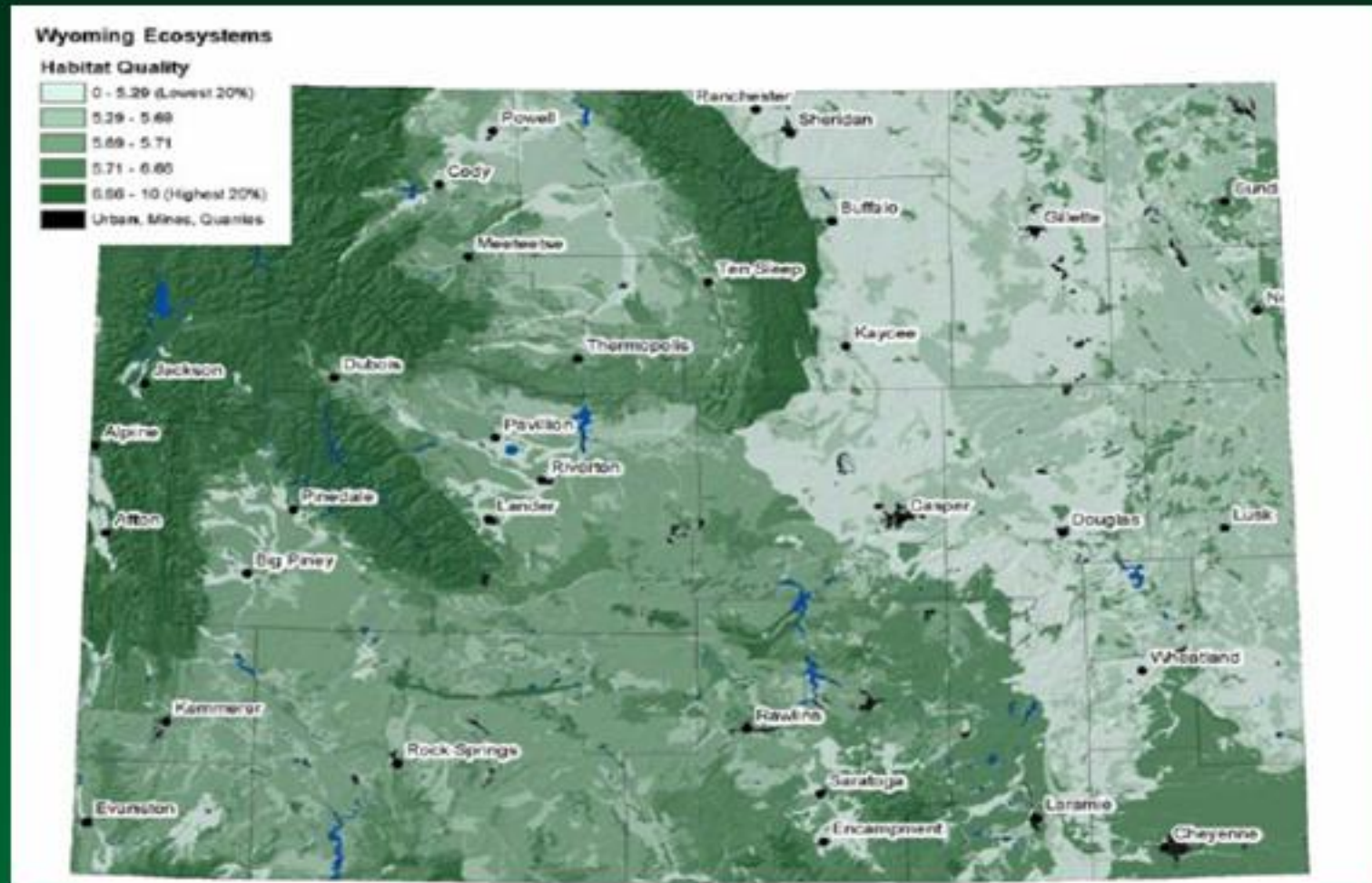
Additional Categories

- Goals
- Maps
- Methods
- Leadership
- Policy Connections
- Funding
- Format

Database

- Scoring system (0-4 ratings) based on categories
- 54 final submissions to USFWS were evaluated (Am. Samoa & N. Marianas not available).
- Additional sub-assessments on individual categories and conservation issues (e.g. transportation, sprawl & land use planning, climate change)

Assessments of Wildlife

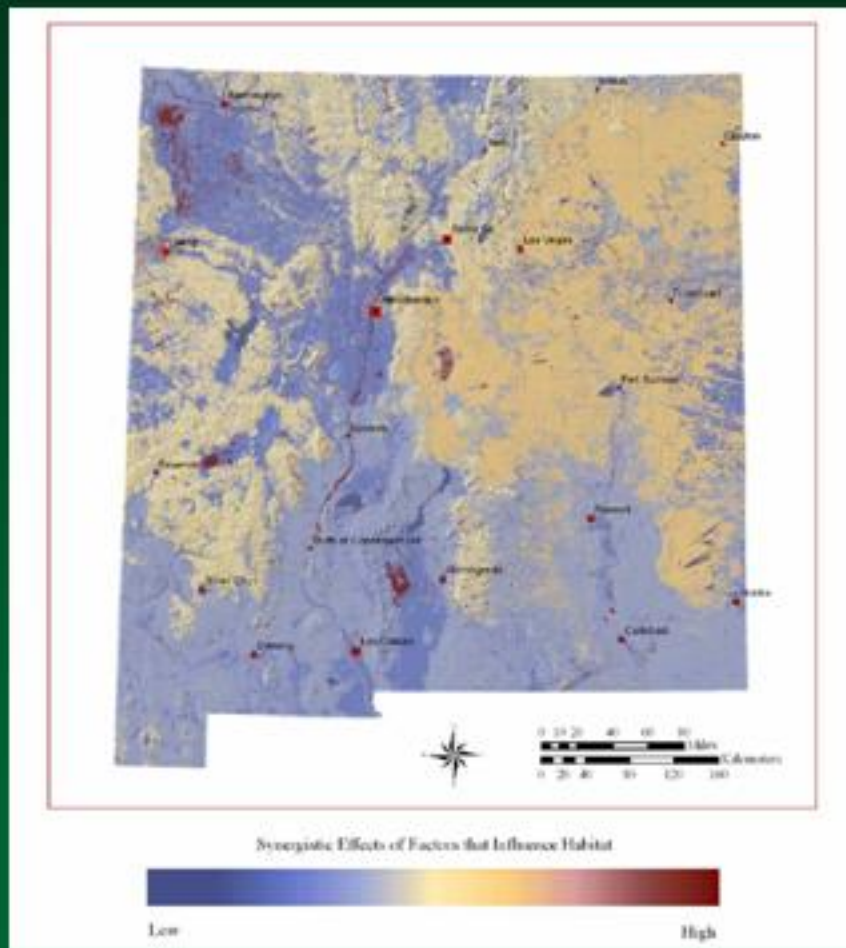


Source: Wyoming Game & Fish Department, 2005

Assessments of Wildlife

Threats Map:
Synergistic Effects of
Factors that Influence
Habitat

(NMGFD, 2005)



Urban Development Threats



Emphasis on development threats to wildlife in each State Wildlife Action Plan

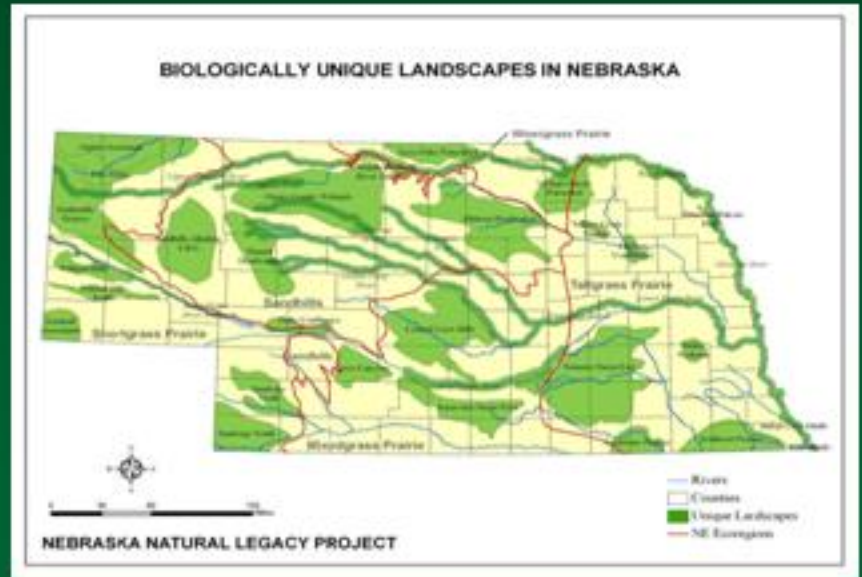


Threat Emphasis
■ Top Priority Threat
■ Significant Threat
■ Threat to Wildlife



Habitat Conservation: Mapping is Key

40% of States produced maps showing conservation focal areas

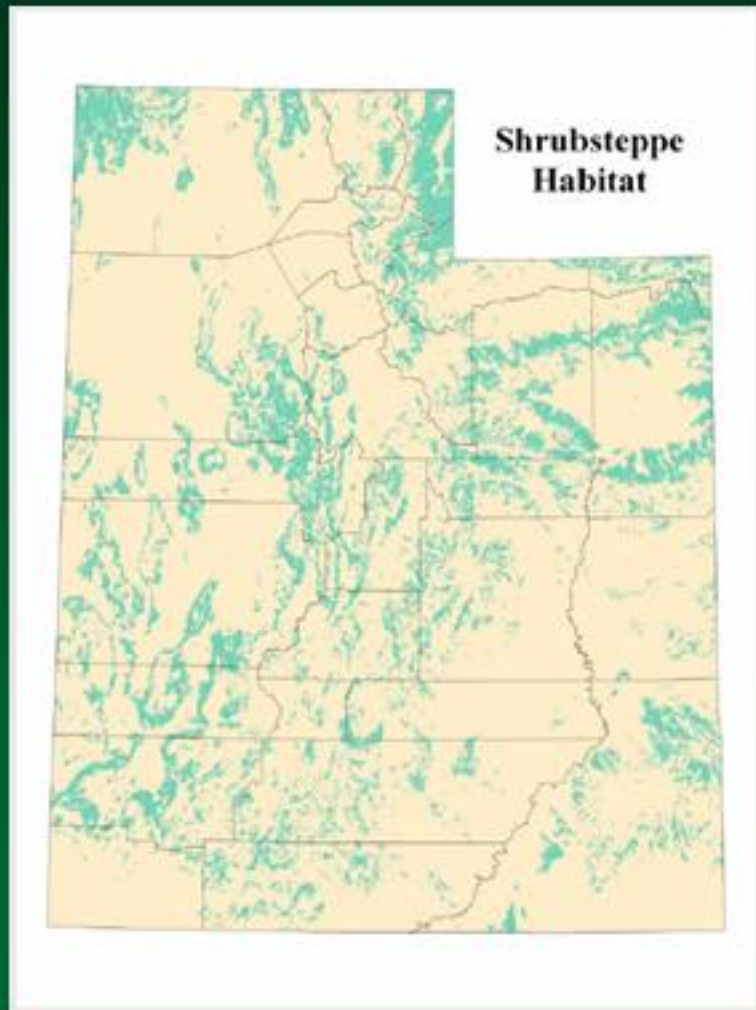


Maps and Priorities

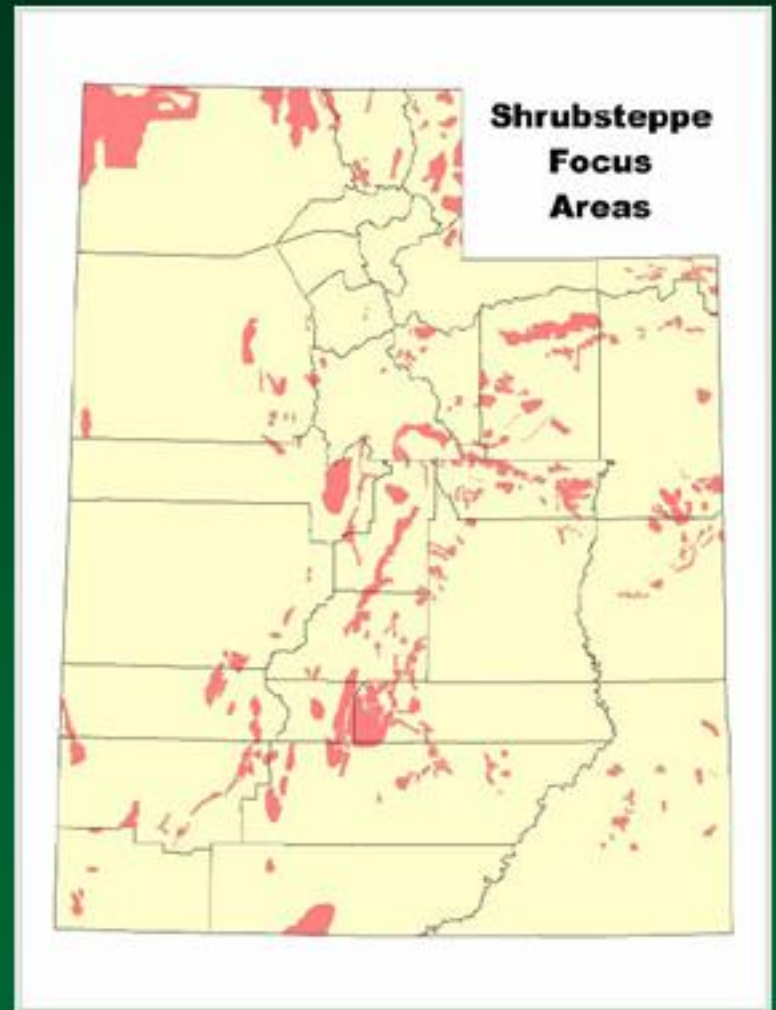
- Why map priorities?
 - Conservation planning is a spatial exercise
 - Maps help partners work together with a common vocabulary
- “Priority habitats” = at-risk or sensitive
- “Focal areas” = subset of at-risk habitats; best conservation opportunities (ecological significance, threats, opportunities)

Utah: Mapped Priorities

- Priority habitat



- Conservation focus area



Strategy & Implementation

Goals: 28% of plans included specific and measurable goals

Illinois Coastal Plain Natural Division:

“By 2020, increase land in public ownership within the project area to 60,000 acres; achieve partial reconnection of the Upper and Lower Segments of the Cache River by 2010; reduce peak flows in Big Creek by 25%” (pp. 128).

Source: Illinois Department of Natural Resources, 2005

Strategy & Implementation

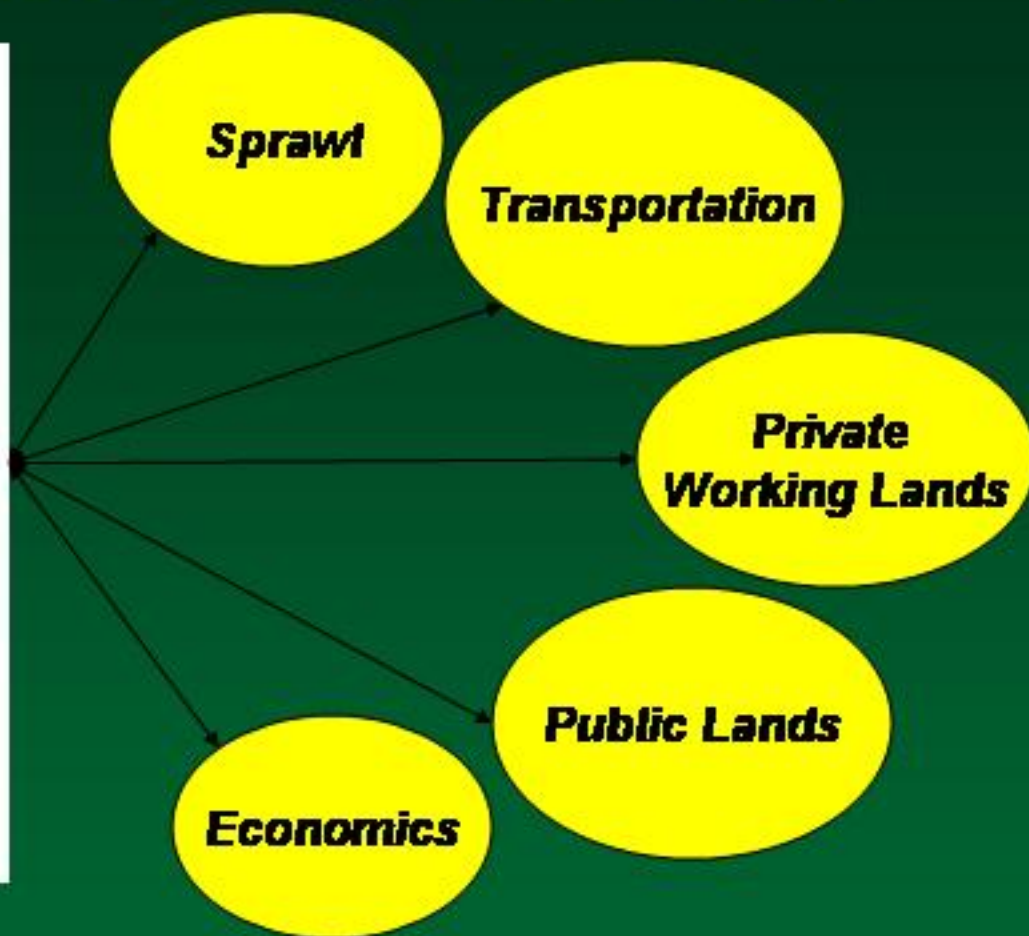
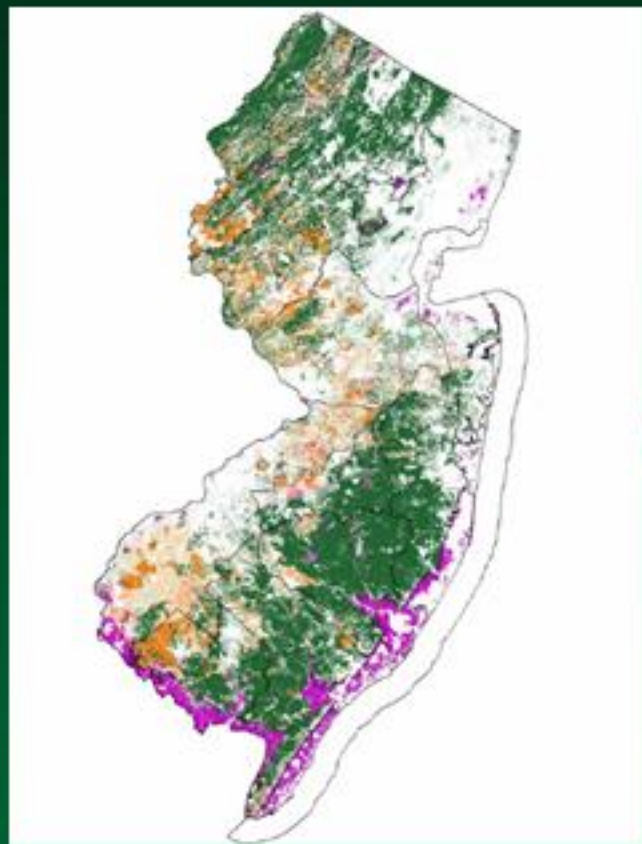
Actions: 60% of plans prioritized actions

Planning and Standards:

Overall Rank	Action	Feasibility	Benefit	Cost
H	Explore ways to protect natural lands and commercial forests from conversion that are outside an Urban Service Boundary. Develop incentives to take into consideration wildlife, habitat, and available water resources.	L	VH	M
H	Convene a coalition of appropriate stakeholders (for example, conservationists, state natural resource agencies, agricultural interests, and major development and economic interests in Florida) to develop voluntary and incentive-based opportunities and methods for more ecologically friendly development and to develop additional resources to protect, acquire, and manage natural lands identified in the "Cooperative Conservation Blueprint" process.	M	H	M
M	Support retention of the designations of Areas of Critical State Concern (http://ccgov.carr.org/plan-d/manchester/chapter8.pdf) for the City of Apalachicola, City of Key West, Green Swamp, Florida Keys (Monroe County), Big Cypress Swamp (Miami-Dade, Monroe, and Collier counties).	H	M	L
M	Encourage public/private partnerships to cooperatively help guide development design and implementation with the goal of maximizing protection and proper management of natural habitat identified in the "Cooperative Conservation Blueprint."	M	M	M

Source: Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission, 2005

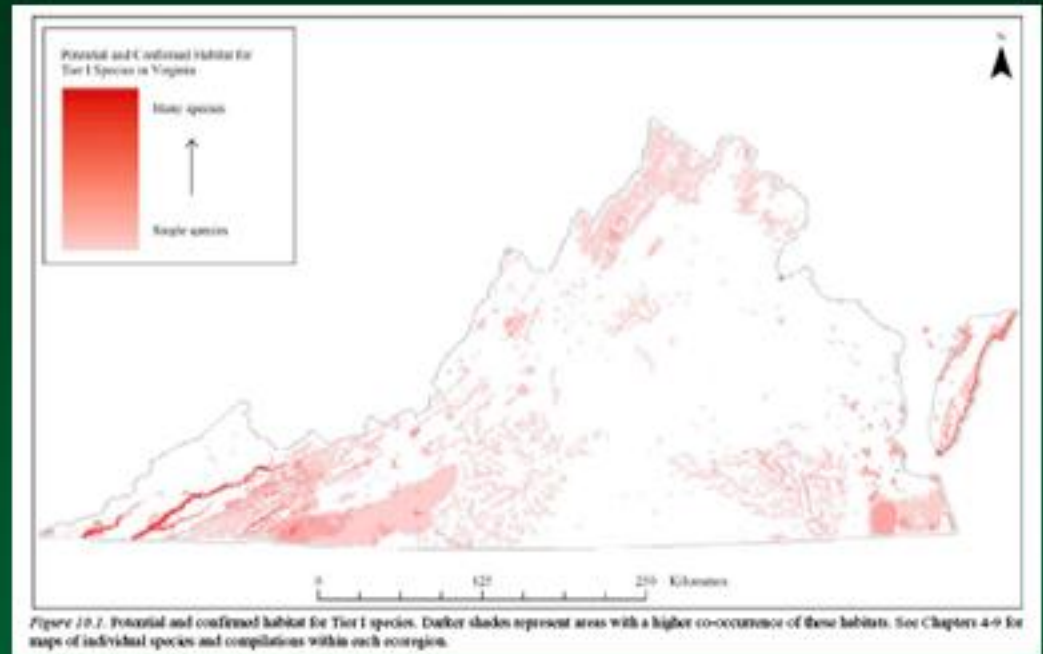
Conservation Plans & Policy Connections



Conservation plans should address land use decisions that cause habitat loss

Coordination

Steering Committee:
Dept. of Transportation
Dept. of Forestry
Dept. of Agriculture
NRCS
USFWS
US DOD
NPS
USFS
NGOs & Land Trusts
Regional Planning District
Commission



Virginia Conservation
Opportunities Map

Overall Top Quality Plans

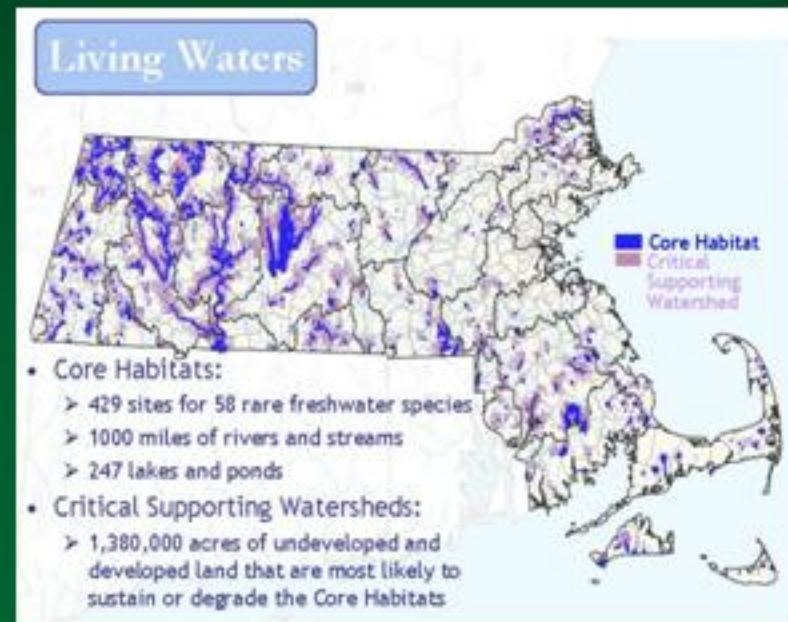
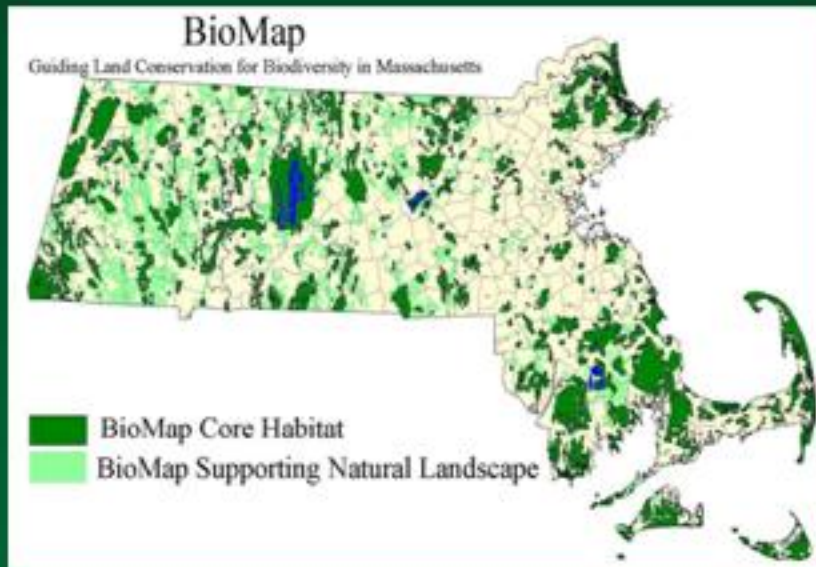
STATE WILDLIFE PLANS: STATE LEADERS

Winter 2006



Massachusetts

- BioMap and Living Waters
- Maps incorporated into local planning



New Hampshire

- Landscape analysis
- Focal maps to communities
- Land protection strategy
- Landowner incentives

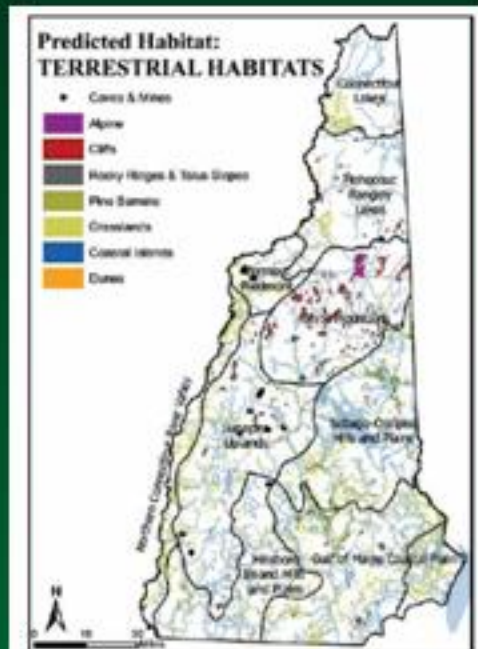


FIGURE 3-8. Predicted Terrestrial Habitats. Terrestrial Habitat maps were created by NHFG and NHB. Map validation is a priority WAP objective.

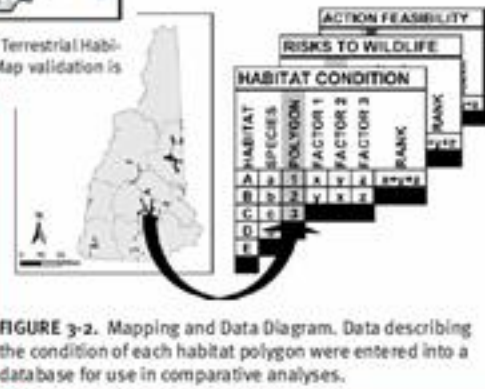


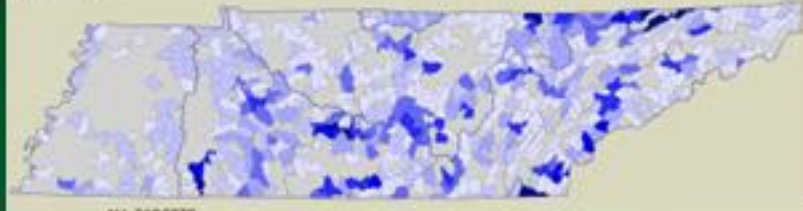
FIGURE 3-2. Mapping and Data Diagram. Data describing the condition of each habitat polygon were entered into a database for use in comparative analyses.

Tennessee

Map 4. Current Statewide Priority Terrestrial Habitat Areas for GCN Species by Tier Level



ALL TARGETS



ALL TARGETS



Focal areas identified
priority habitat types:

- Terrestrial
- Aquatic
- Subterranean



North Carolina



Figure 4C.5. Onslow Bight region, North Carolina, 2004.

Onslow Bight Conservation Forum

- Core Areas
- Managed Areas
- Isolated Sites
- Corridor Study Areas
- Functional Corridors
- Buffers

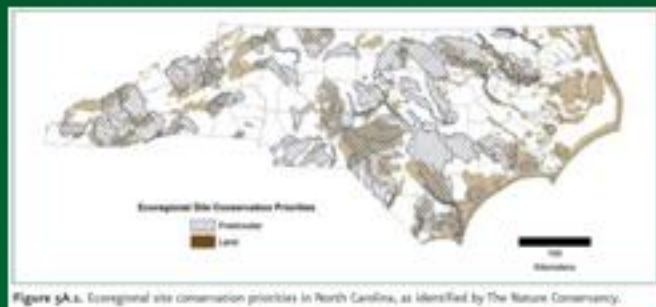
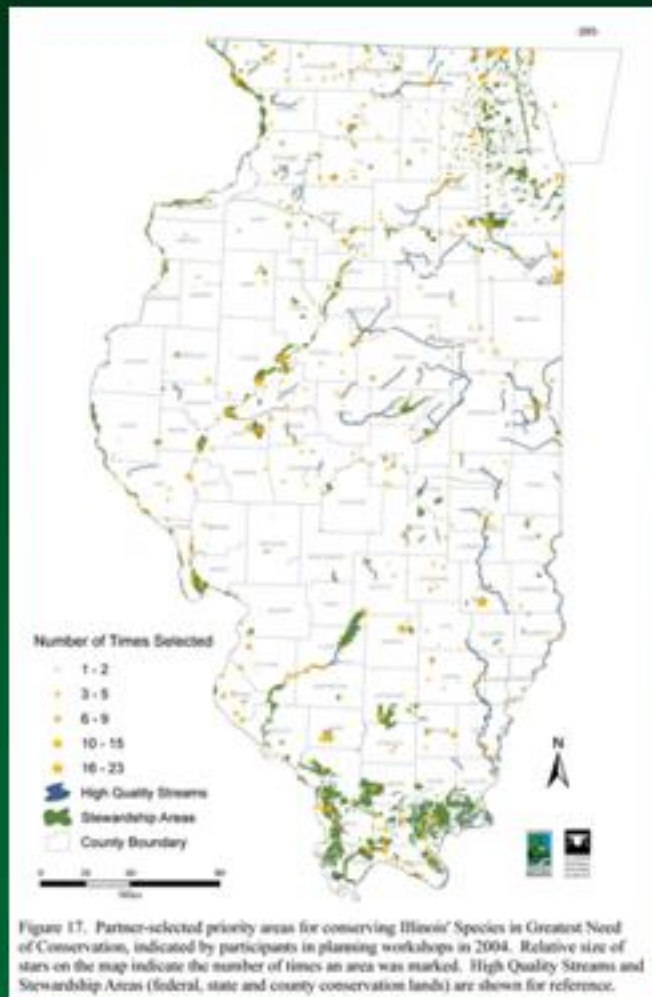


Figure 5A.1. Ecological site conservation priorities in North Carolina, as identified by The Nature Conservancy.

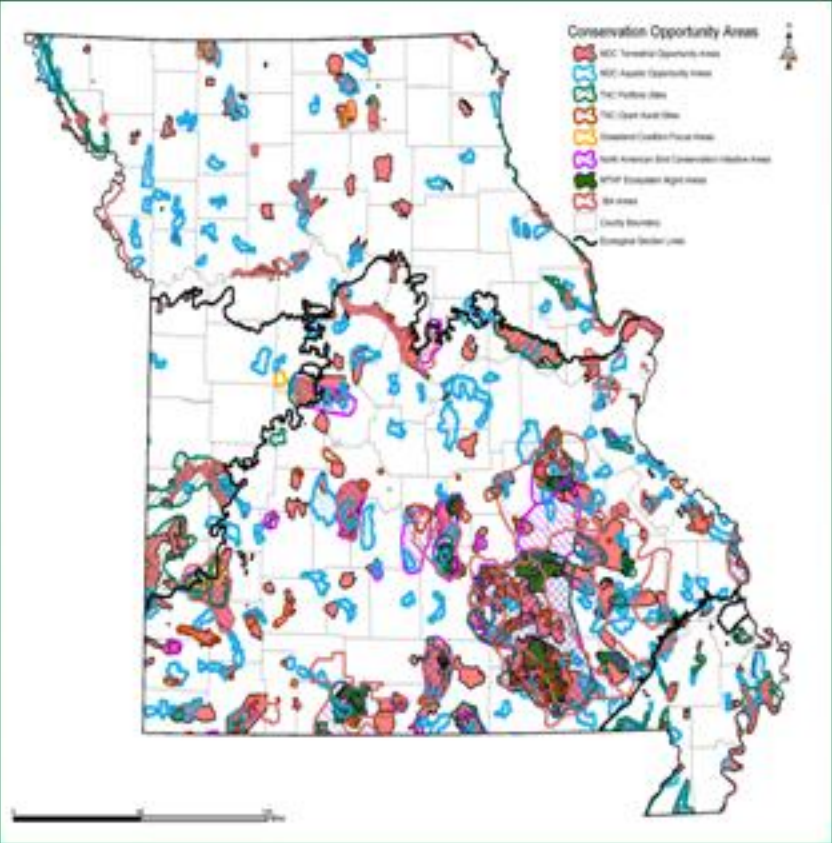
Illinois

- Target easements to achieve desired wildlife and habitat benefits, based on sound principles of reserve design, patch size, and long-term viability
- Restoration / enhancement / stewardship funding for new easements
- Specific tool for several conservation opportunity areas



Missouri

- Overlapping priorities from several conservation partners

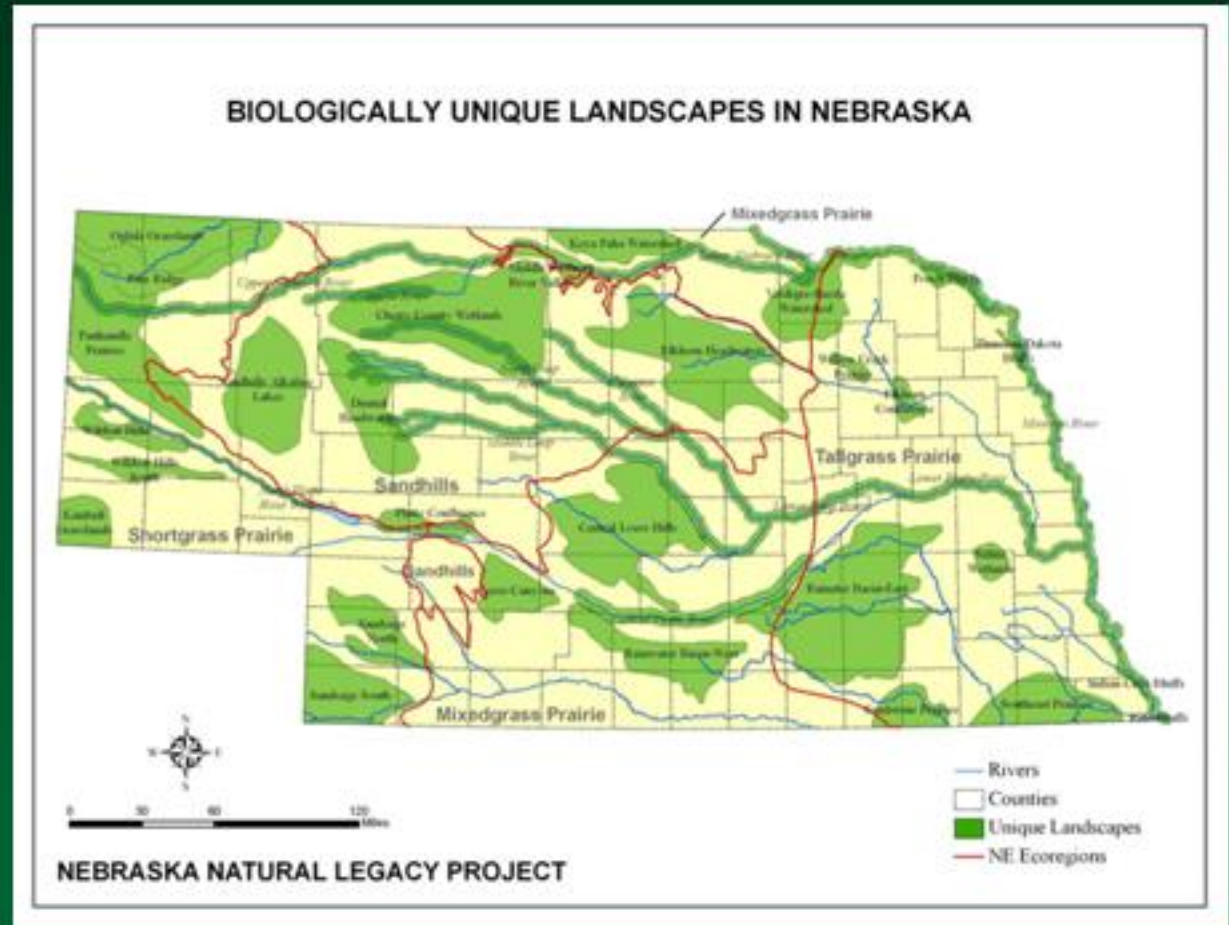


- Conservation Opportunity Areas represent native ecosystems, communities, and species



Nebraska

- Biologically unique landscapes
- Ranking based on rarity / at risk status
- Improve habitat conditions

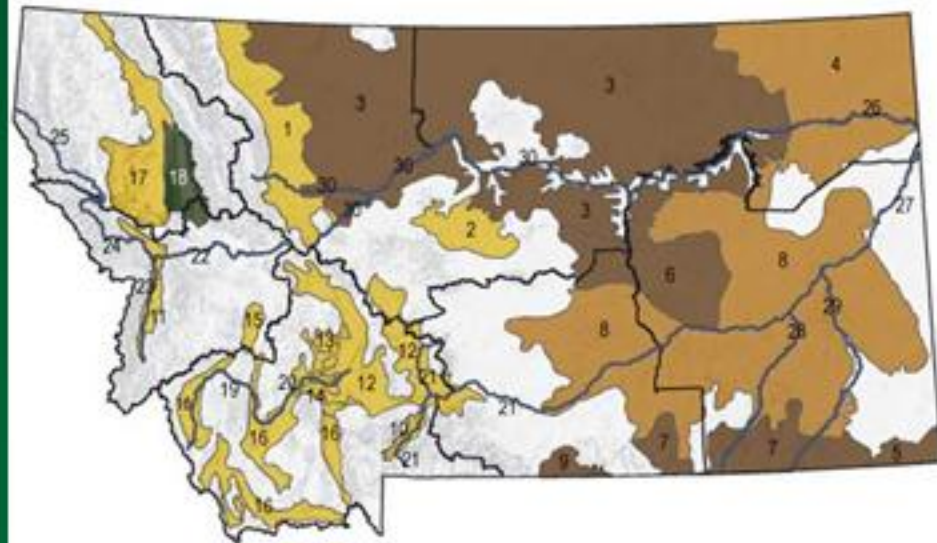
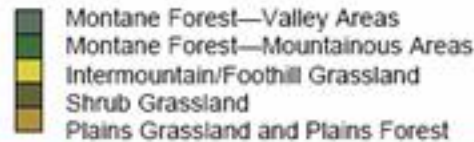


Nebraska: Easements

- Encourage and support the formation of new (or expansion of existing) land trusts to acquire and manage conservation easements that conserve biological diversity in Nebraska
- Use easements to facilitate the long-term protection of biologically important lands enrolled in short-term conservation programs (e.g. Conservation Reserve Program)

Montana

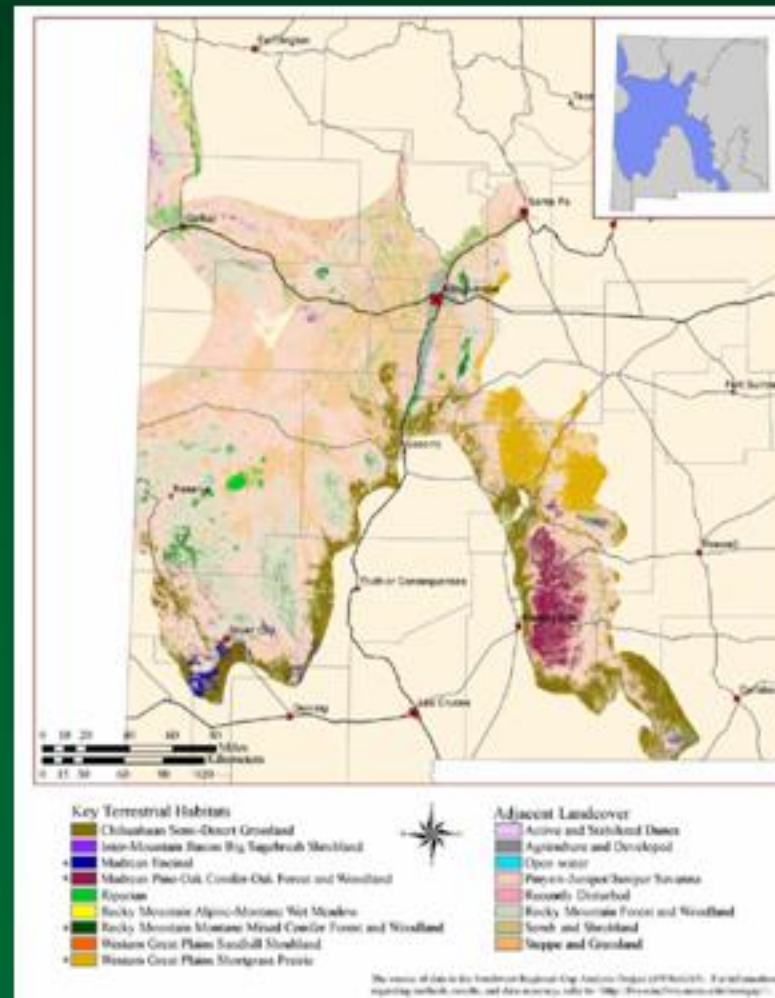
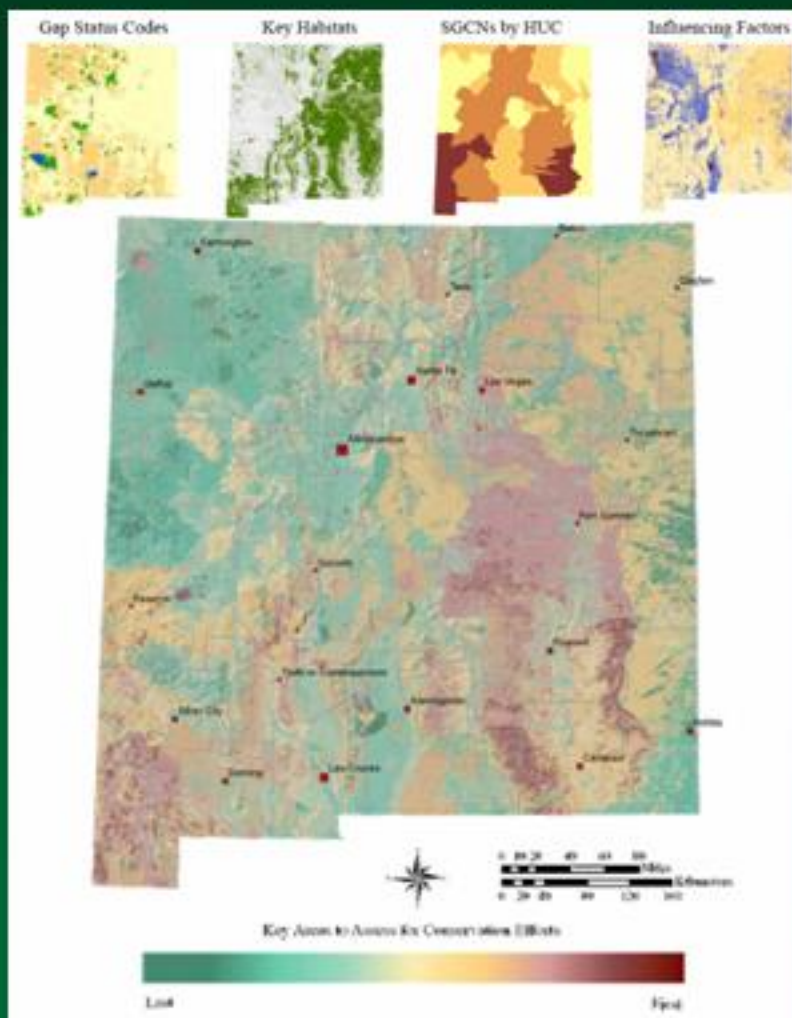
- 5 ecotypes
- Focus areas by ecotype
- Profile of each focus area



New Mexico

- combined priorities from four maps

- Key habitats in each ecoregion



Oregon

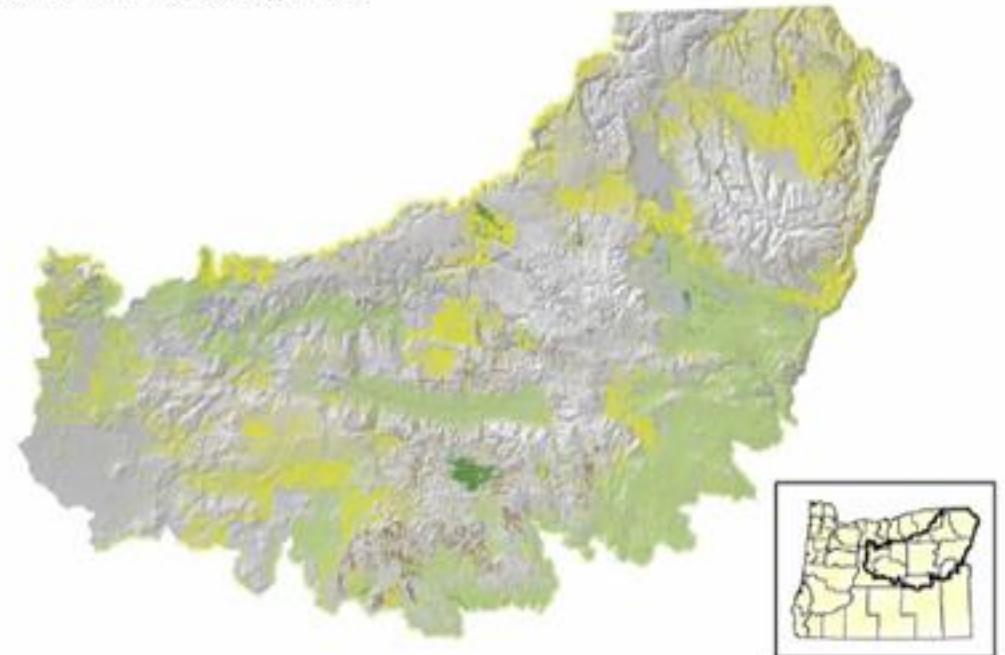
- At-Risk Habitats
- Blue Mountains
- Historic and current distribution

Change in Strategy Habitats

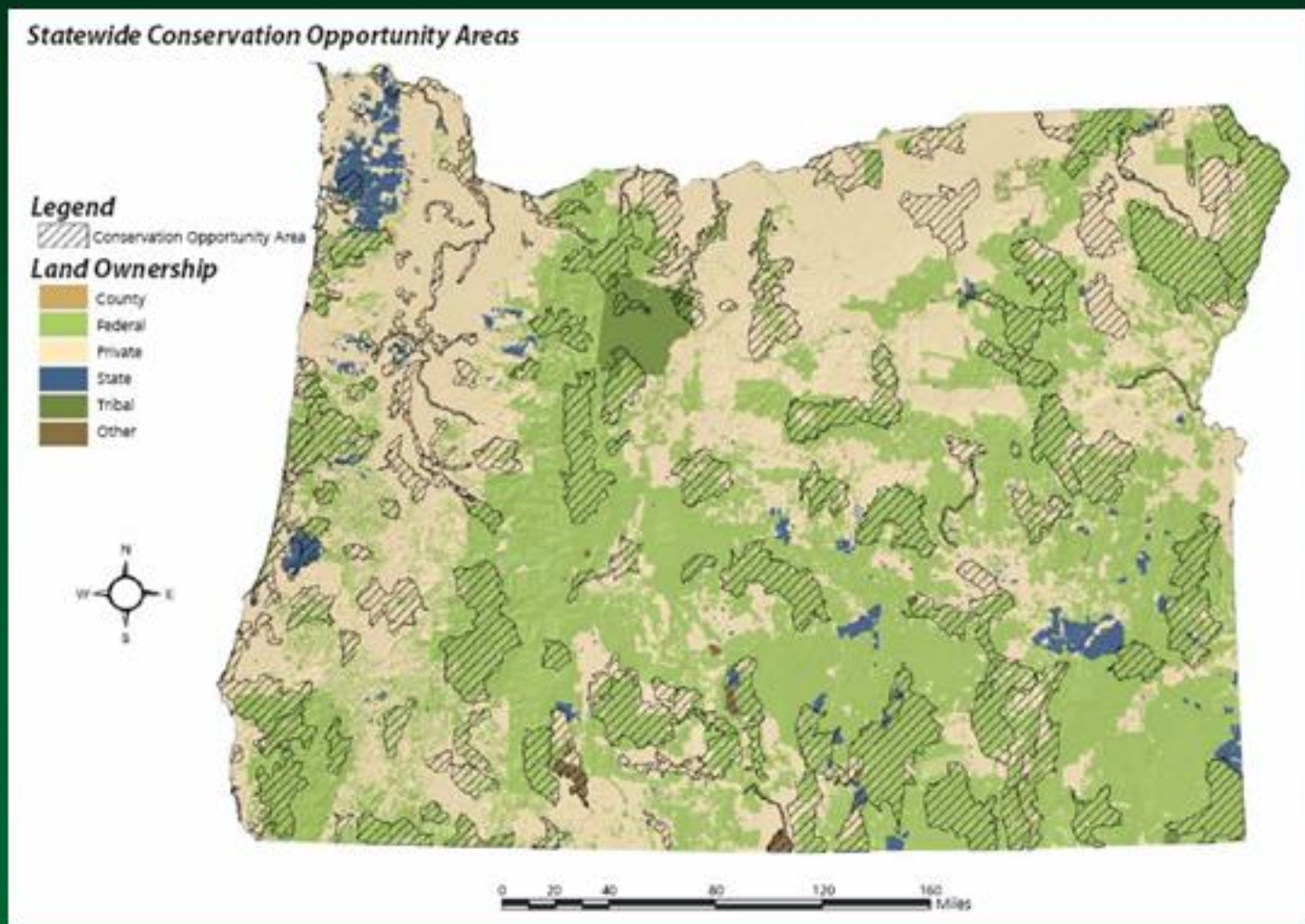
Historic (1850) Distribution of Strategy Habitats



Current (2004) Distribution of Strategy Habitats



Oregon: Conservation Opportunity Areas



Next Steps

- Set Goals
- Produce Focal Area Maps
- Prioritize Actions
- Make Policy Connections
- Coordinate with Others
- Develop Monitoring Systems
- Establish Implementation Committees

Funding: Strategic Investment in Habitat Conservation

- The U.S. spends approximately \$4 Billion a year on land conservation.
- State Wildlife Grants provides \$65 million a year for wildlife planning, research and some habitat conservation.
- More strategic use of land conservation spending for habitat values is critical and achievable with conservation plans.

Implementation

- Benefits to Land Trusts:
 - Action Plans as a tool
 - Fish and Wildlife Agencies as partners
 - TWW Coalition: leadership opportunity
 - Access to Sportsmen



What is TWW?

- National and state-based
- Funding the plans, implementing the plans
- Build state conservation agenda
- Working with private landowners

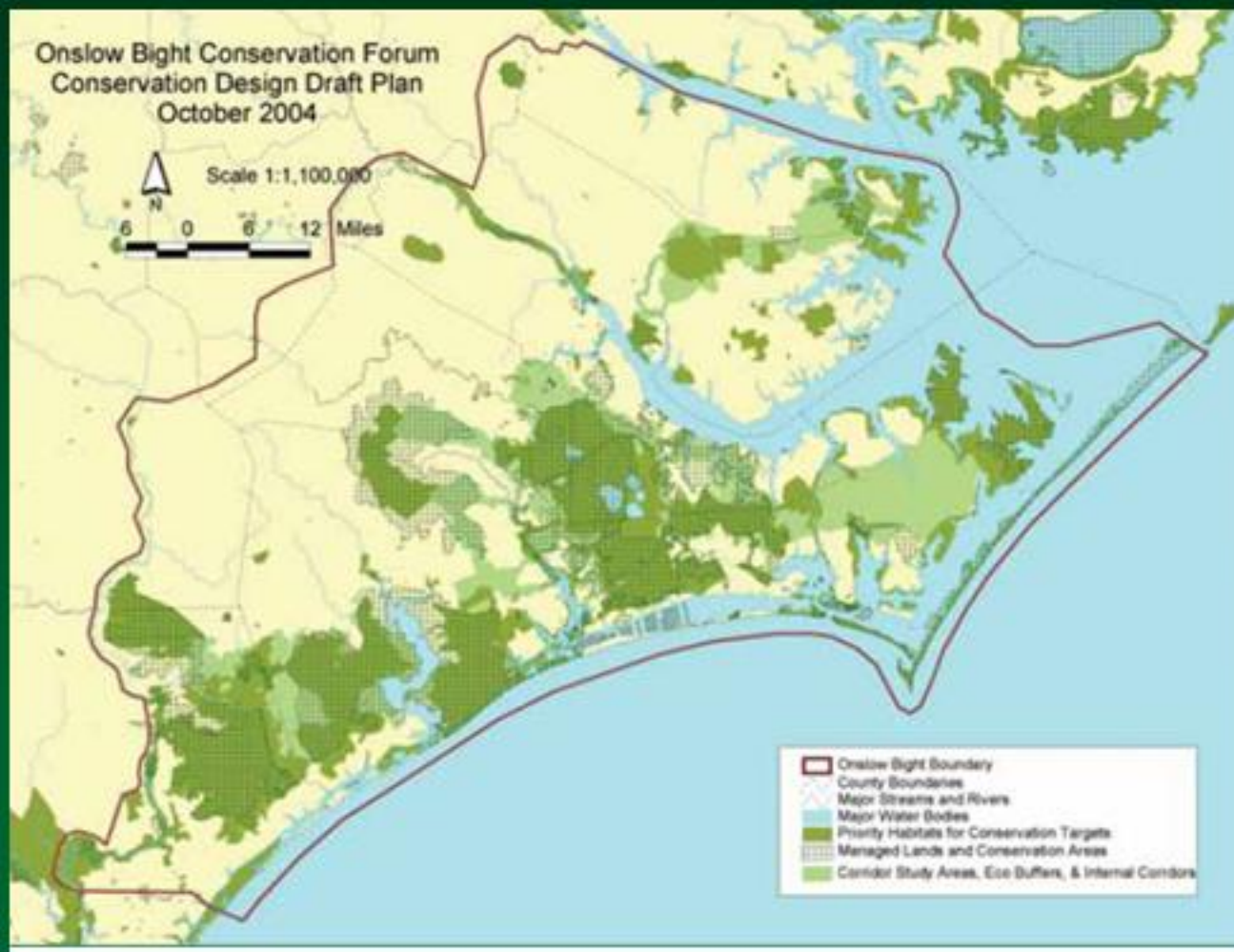


Teaming With Wildlife & NWF

- NWF sees plans as historic milestone
- Doris Duke Charitable Foundation Grant:
funding work in GA, MA, MT, NC and WI
- Objective-- build partnerships that will:
 - Support plan implementation
 - Support better funding
 - Support state fish & wildlife agencies



Implementation: NC Onslow Bight Conservation Forum



Implementation: NC Onslow Bight Partnership

- Major partners:
 - DOD, FWS, USFS, NC Wildlife Resources Comm.
 - TNC, North Carolina Coastal Land Trust
- Unique landscape: barrier islands
- Goal: enhanced cooperation
- Strategy: land conservation



Case Study: NC Onslow Bight Partnership

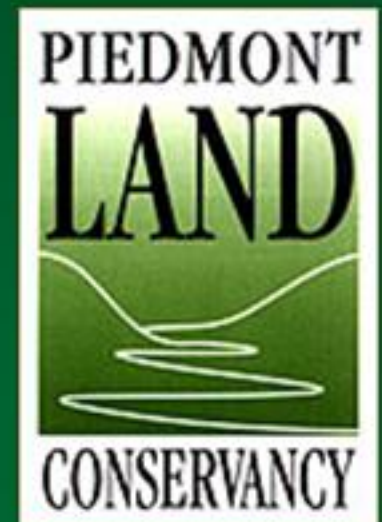
Outcomes:

- Established area as priority
- Better coordination
- NCCLT: contracted by Cherry Point
- Secured 2 NAWCA grants (\$1 mil each)

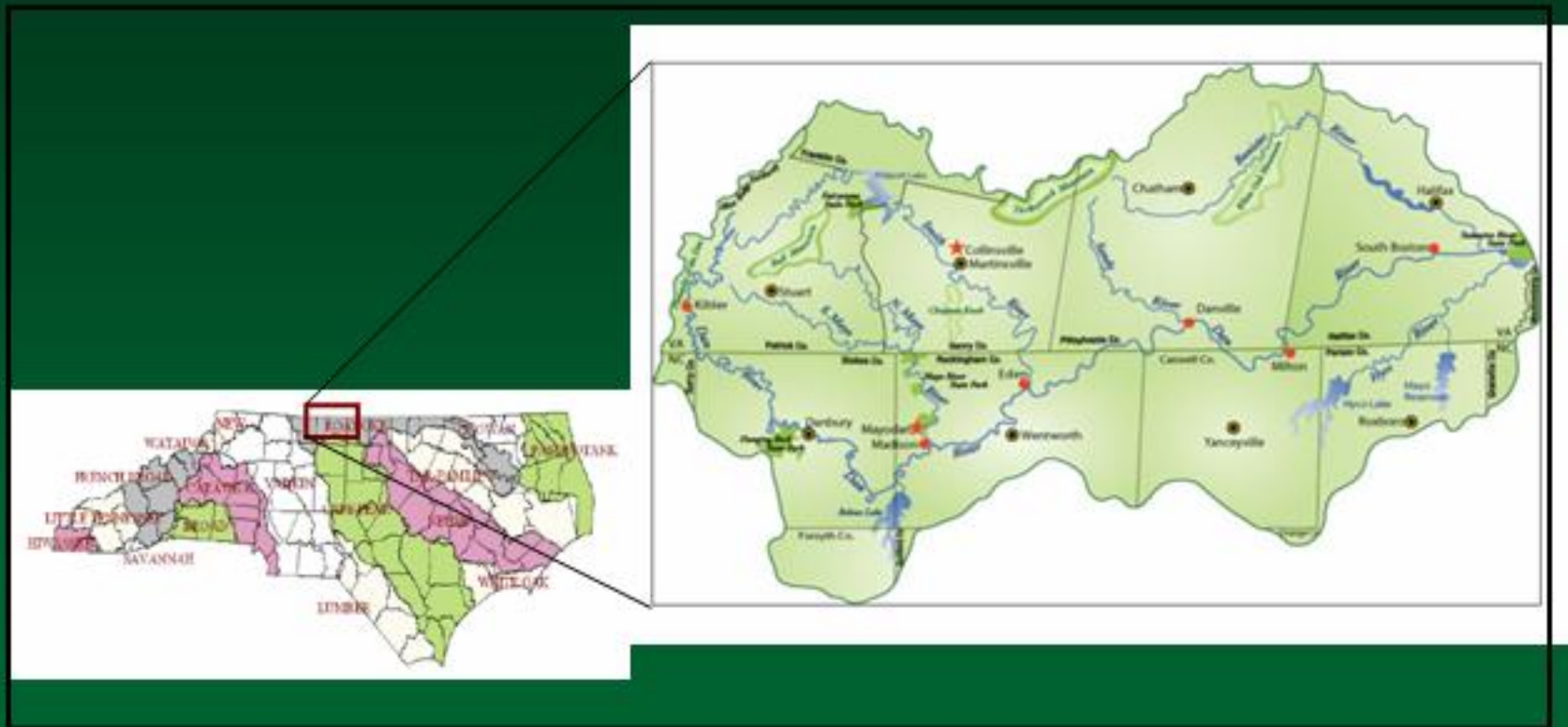


Implementation: NC Dan River Watershed Protection Plan

- Piedmont Land Conservancy partnership with NC Wildlife Resources Commission
- Integrating Action Plan into Watershed Plan
- Member of TWW
- Partnership facilitated by:
NC Wildlife Federation through TWW



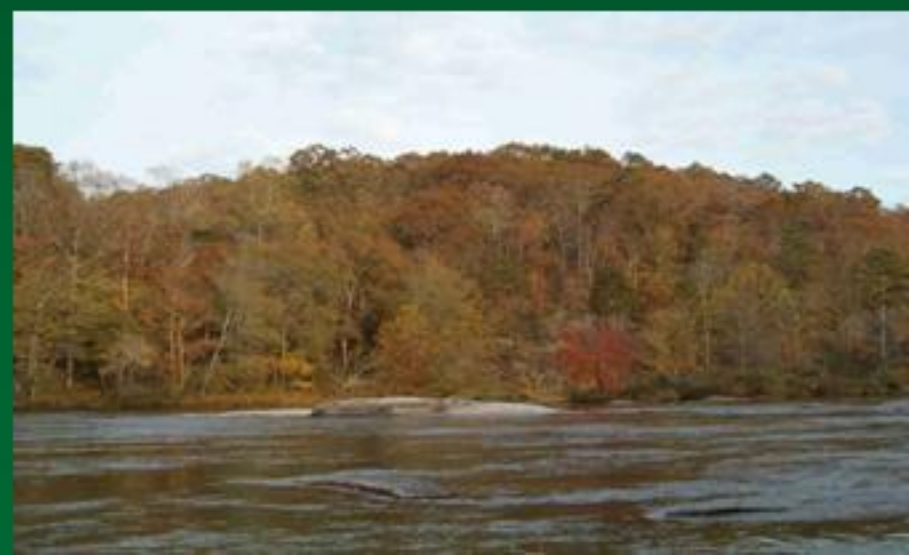
Implementation: NC Dan River Watershed



*Map of the Dan River Basin within the Roanoke Watershed in North Carolina.
Created by the Dan River Basin Association (www.danriver.org).*

Implementation: GA Broad River Natural Area

- 420 acre tract in Madison Co
- State owned (open year round)
- Restoration Project: GWF, NWF, GA DNR
- 40+ people from TWW coalition



Implementation: FL Phifer Flatwoods

- Partnership: Alachua Conservation Trust
Florida Wildlife Federation
- FWF provided “bridge loan” for purchase
- 643 acre tract
- Flatwoods, cypress domes, blackwater creeks
- Adjoins Payne’s Prairie State Preserve



Implementation: NE Northern Prairies Land Trust

- Funding from NE Game & Fish Commission
- Using SWG \$, NPLT hired new staff
- Focus area: Verdigre/Brazile Creek Watersheds
- Conservation Priority: enhance native prairie
- Natural Legacy = NE Action Plan



Conclusions

- Land uses that impact habitat will continue to put species at risk
- ESA implementation will continue to be controversial, upstream solutions are needed
- All states have a comprehensive wildlife conservation plan with potential to provide strategic direction for wildlife protection and public benefits
- Opportunities for land trust involvement in strategic habitat protection, restoration, policy and funding

Questions:

Was anyone involved in developing their state's wildlife action plan?

Do you see opportunities to use your state's information or enter a partnership?

For more information on state wildlife plans:

www.defenders.org/statewildlifeplans

www.biodiversitypartners.org

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Living Lands Project

What Can Land Trusts Do?

- Learn about your state wildlife action plan
- Ask states to tell you where it is most important to protect wildlife habitat
- Invest your time and dollars strategically in those places
- Make use of incentive programs to restore or manage habitat and implement actions
- Help your state improve its wildlife plan