

APPENDIX C.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF STAKEHOLDER INPUT MEETING

Executive Summary of the
NC Wildlife Action Plan
Stakeholder Input Meeting
2 March 2004

Sponsored by the NC Wildlife Resources Commission

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Participant Input for the Wildlife Action Plan

The NC Wildlife Resources Commission (Commission) held a meeting on March 2, 2004 to educate stakeholders about the State Wildlife Grants Program and the Wildlife Action Plan (Plan), gain a better understanding of the conservation concerns of stakeholders, and learn how stakeholder groups would like to be involved in the Plan development and implementation process. Watershed Education for Communities and Local Officials (WECO), a Cooperative Extension program at NCSU, was asked to help facilitate stakeholder involvement. Fifty-two stakeholders attended, as well as 17 Commission staff, and 4 WECO facilitators (73 people in total). The meeting began with a Commission presentation to give participants background information about the State Wildlife Grants Program, the Plan requirement, and progress to-date towards developing North Carolina's Plan. An open discussion period followed as time allowed before lunch. After lunch, participants were split into four groups. Each group answered the same 3 questions. The questions were:

1. How should the Commission coordinate with stakeholders and involve the public in developing, implementing, and revising the Wildlife Action Plan?
2. What do you see as the most significant fish and wildlife conservation issues in North Carolina?
3. How do you propose that these issues be addressed?

The data from these four groups was compiled by the WECO facilitators and written up in a 17 page report. The results of the report are summarized below.

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Questions 1: How should the Commission coordinate with stakeholders and involve the public in developing, implementing, and revising the Wildlife Action Plan? Major themes of discussion are listed below.

During the development of the Wildlife Action Plan:

- Develop a mechanism to build and facilitate stakeholder participation (website, emails, newsletters, etc.)
- Make use of existing plans and information that stakeholder groups can provide
- Develop an internal prioritization mechanism for funding
- Develop a system for measuring progress and success towards goals
- Solicit structured input – need guidelines & clear objectives
- Acknowledge all the issues, what the Commission can do, what is beyond Commission jurisdiction, and who should be involved in the solution

During implementation & revision of the Wildlife Action Plan:

- Work directly with landowners—they are key to future fish and wildlife conservation
- Involve local planning commissions, local governments
- Engage the urban public to increase the visibility of projects
- Coordinate with the Department of Transportation
- Stress the economic and recreational benefit of wildlife
- Develop a public education campaign – get the public involved in hands-on work
- Use stakeholder groups to engage constituents
- Develop a Public Relations plan – tailor and market your message to different groups
- Track the implementation process in a medium that engages the public (video, PSA, public television)
- Identify and diversify sources for match funding; initiate discussions with others outside the agency about match opportunities
- Put out requests for proposals/grant applications; develop a mechanism to prioritize and administer funds externally

How will the Commission use this input?

Feedback related to ways that the Commission can engage and involve stakeholders during the development of the Wildlife Action Plan helped to confirm plans that we were already considering, or that we intend to pursue in the near future.

- The newly created Wildlife Action Plan web site will serve as the main source of information exchange between the Commission and stakeholders. Within the “Comments” section of the web site, we have listed existing conservation plans/resources that we will reference within the final document, and we invite visitors to add to the list.
- The development of systems to prioritize project funding and to measure progress and success towards conservation goals are critical components of the Plan development process. Division of Inland Fisheries and Division of Wildlife Management staff have initiated discussions on both topics and are working to develop such systems.
- Commission staff involved in the development of Plan text will continue to engage their professional contacts to solicit feedback and information. Widespread input on sections of the Plan will be sought via the website, in a structured format that will make feedback and comments easy to track and manage.

Participant suggestions related to ways of engaging stakeholders in the long-term are, to a large degree, goals that we must strive for over time and as opportunities arise. These are issues that are important not only to the Wildlife Action Plan and the State Wildlife Grants Program, but to the overall mission of the Commission, and to other natural resource agencies and organizations.

- The Commission is continually striving to improve opportunities to engage segments of the greater public, especially private landowners and the urban public. A key responsibility of our Piedmont Faunal Diversity Biologist is to pursue ways of engaging the urban public and involving them in projects. These sorts of opportunities will be highlighted within the Plan.
- The Commission, especially the Division of Inland Fisheries, already coordinates heavily with the DOT. With the newly created Ecosystem Enhancement Program, coordination for mitigation planning will increase.
- The entire Division of Conservation Education is dedicated to improving education and outreach opportunities for the public in North Carolina. The suggestions and feedback collected at the meeting related to public education will be used to help direct future planning activities as they relate to on-the-ground projects and educational needs and opportunities.
- Match opportunities are increasingly critical to pursue as other funding sources, such as the nongame tax check-off, continue to decline. The Commission welcomes discussions about match opportunities and overlapping project interests with any individuals who wish to pursue these discussions. We plan to continue to engage stakeholder groups through email, the website, newsletters, and to identify cooperative opportunities wherever we can.

Question 2: What do you see as the most significant fish and wildlife conservation issues in North Carolina? *Individual responses were grouped into categories and then tallied (in parentheses) to give an indication of the issues that were seen as most significant by participants.*

- **Habitat loss issues (54)**
 - Fragmentation (13)
 - (Mis)management (6)
 - Fire suppression (4)
 - Decline/reduction in quality (23)
 - Roads (8)
- **Public knowledge or perception of wildlife/need for education (22)**
- **Water quality/pollution (21)**
 - Water quality (12)
 - Sedimentation (5)
 - Contaminants (4)
- **Development and urbanization (20)**
- **Loss of biodiversity/species declines (11)**
- **Invasive and exotic species (10)**
- **Water resource issues (10)**
 - Dams (4)
 - Other migration barriers (2)
 - Water management/ground water depletion (4)
- **Policy/politics (10)**
- **Human population growth (7)**
- **Lack of data/knowledge gaps (7)**
- **Agriculture and forestry practices (6)**
- **Conflict between economic growth and conservation (5)**
- **Current fisheries regulations (3)**
- **Lack of funding (3)**

How will the Commission use this input?

Participant feedback related to Question 2 was a solid validation of the issues that we plan to address within the text (Threats, Statewide Conservation Strategies, and/or within individual ecoregional sections; see Outline section of the web site), and a reassurance that the concerns of our agency staff are in sync with you, our conservation partners. In some cases, participant feedback has given us a new perspective from which to look at or address certain issues (e.g., the conflict between economics and conservation). Many of these issues are, of course, also well-documented within existing conservation planning documents. The Wildlife Action Plan will be strengthened by the documentation of widespread concern for such issues among conservation stakeholders in North Carolina.

Question 3: How do you propose that these issues be addressed? Solutions proposed by participants are linked to the issues they relate to in the table below.

| Issue | Proposed Solutions |
|---|---|
| Habitat issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor loss of amphibian breeding habitat; • Restore early successional habitat; • Protect existing habitat; • Maintain & connect large blocks of habitat; • Pursue land acquisition/easements; • Restore riparian buffers and wetlands; • Initiate incentives for private landowners; • Promote fire management |
| Public knowledge or perception of wildlife/need for education | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiate urban/backyard wildlife monitoring programs; • Pursue private landowner cooperation and buy-in; • Create opportunities for people to participate in conservation projects; • Make unknown or cryptic groups more visible to the public (e.g., snails); • Promote fire management; • Engage county commissioners |
| Water quality/pollution | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wetlands and riparian buffer protection; • Educate people about “downstream” effects; • Establish cost/benefits of water quality problems; • Establish incentives for riparian buffers; • Designate stream water quality parameters & monitor over the long-term |
| Development and urbanization | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote green development; • Mitigate sprawl; • Mandate incorporation of low impact development, urban revitalization, limits to sprawl |
| Loss of biodiversity/species declines | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiate/continue species specific inventories, monitoring, research; • Identify & protect critical habitats |
| Invasive/exotic species | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fund position to deal exclusively with exotics and invasive species; • Pursue rigorous control of exotics and invasive species |
| Water resource issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restore natural stream flow; • Flow management |
| Policy/politics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve inter-agency cooperation; • Work to reduce stakeholder conflicts; • Mandate incorporation of low impact development, urban revitalization, limits to sprawl; • More stringent land use & watershed planning/regulations; • Encourage DOT to plan for infrastructure and wildlife; • Pursue policy to improve tax benefits & incentives for habitat protection; • Influence transportation policies of DOT |
| Human population growth | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (No specific solutions proposed) |
| Lack of data about species/habitats | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify data/knowledge gaps and work to fill them; • Develop and manage a centralized database |
| Agriculture and forestry practices | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pursue policy to improve tax benefits & incentives for habitat protection; • Pursue private landowner cooperation and buy-in; |
| Economics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasize the economic importance of wildlife |
| Fisheries regulations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic impact of recreational fishing versus commercial fishing is 10:1- use this to justify habitat protection |
| Lack of funding | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make politicians aware of problems and conservation funding gap |

How will the Commission use this input?

The Commission has direct involvement in most of the proposed solutions above. The agency is responsible for conducting species inventories and monitoring, managing and protecting habitat, identifying critical knowledge gaps and data needs, as well as public education and outreach, and landowner programming. Many of these activities are carried out in concert with partnering agencies and organizations with whom we share data, combine resources, and manage land. So, as with Question 1, suggestions about ways of addressing critical conservation issues in the state are goals that we all must strive for over time and as opportunities arise.

Some proposed solutions (e.g., improved water quality monitoring, more stringent land use regulations, changes to fisheries regulations) are beyond the purview of the Commission. We rely on groups such as the Division of Water Quality, local planning commissions, and the Division of Marine Fisheries to address such issues. This emphasizes the importance of cooperation and coordination among agencies to affect statewide conservation solutions, a point that will be highlighted repeatedly within the Wildlife Action Plan.

The Commission recognizes the growing need to engage and educate the general public, private landowners across the state, and to the majority of the population residing in urban centers. We plan to highlight specific ways of engage these groups within the Plan, and to pursue opportunities suggested by participants wherever possible.

Participant List

| Name | Agency/Organization |
|------------------|---|
| Alexa McKerrow | NC GAP |
| Alvin Braswell | NC Museum of Natural Sciences |
| Angie Rodgers | NCWRC |
| Ann Berry Somers | UNC-Greensboro |
| Anne Deaton | NC Division of Marine Fisheries |
| Bethany Olmstead | Piedmont Land Conservancy |
| Bill Mandulak | Coastal Conservation Association |
| Bob Davis | NC Herpetological Society |
| Brad Gunn | NCWRC |
| Carl Dixon | National Wild Turkey Federation |
| Chris Elkins | Coastal Conservation Association |
| Chris McGrath | NCWRC |
| Chris Moorman | NC State University |
| Christy Perrin | Watershed Education for Communities and Local Officials |
| Chuck Peoples | Tar River Land Conservancy |
| Connie Tysinger | NC Bowhunters Association |
| Curtis Smalling | Audubon NC |
| Dave Davenport | NC Museum of Natural Sciences |
| David Cobb | NCWRC |
| David McNaught | Environmental Defense |
| Dennis Herman | Project Bog Turtle |
| Dick Lancia | NC State University |
| Emily Ander | Triangle Land Conservancy |
| Fred Harris | NCWRC |
| Grady McCallie | NC Conservation Network |
| Greg Cope | NC State University |
| Greg Messenger | Piedmont Land Conservancy |

Participant List *(continued)*

| Name | Agency/Organization |
|---------------------------|---|
| Henry Hammond | Nongame Wildlife Advisory Committee |
| Holly Allen | NCWRC |
| Jack Thigpen | NC SeaGrant |
| Jeff Beane | NC Museum of Natural Sciences |
| Jeff Esely | Mecklenburg County Division of Natural Resources |
| Jeff Marcus | NCWRC |
| Jeff Masten | Triangle Land Conservancy |
| Jennifer Braswell | UNC-Greensboro (grad student) |
| Jodie Best | NCWRC |
| Joe McDonald | NC Wildlife Federation |
| John Alderman | Independent contractor |
| John Connors | Wake Audubon |
| John Hagan | NC Wildlife Habitat Foundation |
| JohnAnn Shearer | US Fish & Wildlife Service |
| Josh Rose | Ellerbe Creek Watershed Association |
| Kat Oury | Watershed Education for Communities and Local Officials |
| Kate Pipkin | NCWRC |
| Kelli Johnson | SciWorks Science Center |
| Ken Bridle | Nongame Wildlife Advisory Committee |
| Leland Heath | Clean Water Management Trust Fund |
| Margit Bucher | The Nature Conservancy |
| Mark Johns | NCWRC |
| MaryKay Clark | NC Museum of Natural Sciences |
| Matina Kalcounis-Rueppell | UNC-Greensboro |
| Megan Wargo | Piedmont Land Conservancy |
| Michael Holmes | Watershed Education for Communities and Local Officials |
| Nolan Banish | NCWRC |
| Patrick Beggs | Watershed Education for Communities and Local Officials |
| Richard Rodgers | DENR |
| Rick Yates | Progress Energy |
| Rusty Painter | Conservation Trust of NC |
| Salinda Daley | NCWRC |
| Sarah Cross | NCWRC |
| Sarah Mabey | NCSU post doc with Ted Simons |
| Scott Anderson | NCWRC |
| Scott Van Horn | NCWRC |
| Shannon Deaton | NCWRC |
| Sudie Daves | Mecklenburg Co Division of Natural Resources |
| Tom Craven | Triangle Land Conservancy |
| Tom Duckwall | T.G. Pearson Audubon Society (Deep River Project) |
| Tom Henson | NCWRC |
| Tom Kwak | NC State University |
| Wade Teague | Quail Unlimited |
| Walker Golder | Audubon NC |
| Wayne Van Devender | Appalachian State University |