

COMMISSION MEETING AGENDA BRIEFING

Meeting Date: August 9, 2024

Agenda Number: 8

Presenter: Stewart Liley

Corroborator: __N/A__

Agenda Title: Update on Required Revision of the State Wildlife Action Plan

1. Summary of Agenda Item

The Department will present an update on the 2025 review and revision of the State Wildlife Action Plan for New Mexico. The U.S. Congress mandates that these plans be comprehensively reviewed and revised every 10 years (Public Law 106-553, Appendix B Title IX, Section 902).

2. Background Information

When Congress created the State Wildlife Grants Program, it required each state wildlife agency to develop a comprehensive wildlife conservation strategy to qualify for Program funds. These are not regulatory documents and are intended to represent state-wide wildlife conservation strategies for implementation by the Department and its partners. New Mexico developed a Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS) in 2005 and, per Program requirements, the Department conducted a comprehensive review and revision of the CWCS that was completed in 2016 and the updated State Wildlife Action Plan for New Mexico (SWAP) was approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in 2017. The Department is currently conducting a federally-mandated 10-year review and revision of the 2017-approved SWAP with final revisions due to USFWS by October 1, 2025. The Department is collaborating with 31 state and federal agencies, universities, non-profits, and other entities that either have significant land management responsibilities or expertise relevant to the SWAP revision process.

Each SWAP must address eight required elements, including identifying Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN); Key Habitats; and Threats to, and Conservation Actions that can be taken to benefit, SGCN and their habitats. The other elements include: developing a monitoring plan; coordinating with interested federal, state, and Tribal entities; providing for public participation; and a schedule for the next comprehensive review. The Plan is largely organized by New Mexico's six major ecoregions and uses the National Vegetation Classification System to describe Key Habitats. The Plan identifies SGCN, Key Habitats, Threats, and Conservation Actions pertinent to each ecoregion. Much of the 2025 10-year revision process is focused on updating the SGCN list and associated content including Key Habitat descriptions and associations, threat descriptions and conservation actions, and providing new information on climate refugia, climate vulnerability of vertebrate SGCN, and Riparian Conservation Opportunity Areas (RCOAs). The Department previously identified 16 Conservation Opportunity Areas where conservation actions can benefit a high diversity of SGCN. RCOAs are intended to help with prioritizing conservation and restoration work in the highly biodiverse riparian areas throughout the state.

3. Strategic Plan References and Possible Impacts of Agenda Item

The SWAP review and revision process as presented to the Commission meets the Conservation Services Program Objective 10 of the Department's Strategic Plan: FY 2019 – FY 2023.

4. Considerations Regarding Duplications and/or Conflicts with Existing Rules or Statutes

None

5. Description and Summary of Public Involvement Process and Results

Following initiation of SWAP review and revision in May 2023, the Department invited individuals at 33 state and federal agencies, universities, non-profits, and other entities to participate in a SWAP core team. The primary intent of this team is to proactively share SWAP content with individuals and organizations with management responsibilities and expertise pertinent to the focus of the SWAP and gather feedback throughout the review and revision process. A total of 31 organizations and 47 individuals have agreed to participate in the core team. The core team will meet a total of 5 times by the end of February 2025. Thus far, the core team has reviewed the draft list of non-insect SGCN. The Department hosted two public meetings at the end of July 2024. Documents for public review were posted on the Department's website on June 28, 2024. The focus of these meetings is on the draft, revised list of SGCN.

6. Suggested Motion

This is a discussion item and no motion is necessary, unless Commission discretion dictates otherwise.