

COMMISSION MEETING AGENDA BRIEFING

Meeting Date: June 13, 2025

Agenda Number: 7

Presenter: Stewart Liley

Corroborator: ___N/A___

Agenda Title: Approval of the State Wildlife Action Plan

1. Summary of Agenda Item

The Department will present on the draft final 2025 State Wildlife Action Plan for New Mexico (available at: <https://wildlife.dgf.nm.gov/download/2025-state-wildlife-action-plan-for-new-mexico-draft/?ind=1746482992081&filename=Draft-2025-State-Wildlife-Action-Plan-for-New-Mexico.pdf&wpdmdl=51050&refresh=681a5ffa6a9de1746558970>) and request the Commission's approval of this document. 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) and the final revised document is due by October 1, 2025.

2. Background Information

When Congress created the State Wildlife Grants Program (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. Since May, 2023 the Department has been 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 has been collaborating with 32 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. They also performed a formal consultation with 29 Pueblos, Tribes, and Nations in New Mexico and neighboring states and met in person with the one Pueblo and one Nation that requested a meeting.

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 has 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 the 295 vertebrate SGCN, and Riparian Conservation Opportunity Areas (RCOAs). In the 2025 draft SWAP, the Department has identified 30 Conservation Opportunity Areas where conservation actions can benefit a high diversity of SGCN. The over 2,300 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 draft final 2025 SWAP as presented to the Commission for approval 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 was 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 32 organizations and 50 individuals agreed to participate in the core team. The core team met a total of 5 times from December, 2023 through February, 2025. Core team members reviewed draft versions of the following SWAP content: the SGCN list; the Conservation Actions; three chapters related to Threats, climate change, and regional conservation; and a table regarding SGCN monitoring activities. 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 was on the draft, revised list of SGCN. The full draft final 2025 SWAP was posted for public comment on May 8, 2025.

6. Suggested Motion

The Department respectfully suggests the following motion unless Commission discretion indicates a different course of action:

"Move to approve the Department's 2025 SWAP and its submission to USFWS."