

# OKLAHOMA COMPREHENSIVE WILDLIFE CONSERVATION STRATEGY REVISION

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# OCWCS Purpose

The Oklahoma Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (OCWCS) is a strategic-level wildlife conservation plan that is focused on the needs of rare and declining wildlife (aka Species of Greatest Conservation Need).

The OCWCS is directly linked to the State & Tribal Wildlife Grants Program and serves as the guiding document for how Oklahoma uses its apportionment of State Wildlife Grant funding.

# State & Tribal Wildlife Grants Purpose

State & Tribal Wildlife Grants provide proactive conservation for rare and declining wildlife

The State Wildlife Grants program is the nation's core program for addressing the conservation of rare and declining wildlife species before they reach a status at which a federal listing action is warranted under the Endangered Species Act.



# State & Tribal Wildlife Grants Purpose

Provides federal cost-share funding to state wildlife conservation agencies to address “species of greatest conservation need” in a manner consistent with the state’s Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy





# State & Tribal Wildlife Grants Specifics

## Congressional Program

Developed by Congress and the Teaming With Wildlife advocates in 1999-2000 as part of the Conservation Trust Fund

Authorized funding level of up to \$125 million/year, but annual appropriations have varied from \$56 to \$90 million



# State & Tribal Wildlife Grants Specifics

Funds are administered through the Federal Assistance Division of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

SWG funds divided into four parts

- 3% to USFWS for administration

- ~ \$5 to 7 million for tribal grants

- ~ \$5 million for competitive multi-state grants

- Remaining funds allocated to state wildlife agencies



# State & Tribal Wildlife Grants Specifics

For grants to states, funds allocated to states on a formula based upon state population (2/3) and state land area (1/3)

Oklahoma's share – 1.52%

ranked 27<sup>th</sup> in funding

below 26 states; above 23 states & 6 terr.



Funds go to the state agency with existing co-op agreement with USFWS for Wildlife Restoration and Sport Fish Restoration programs



# State & Tribal Wildlife Grants Specifics

All SWG funding must be directed toward:

- a need that is identified in the state's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy

AND

- a species that has been identified as a “species of greatest conservation need.”





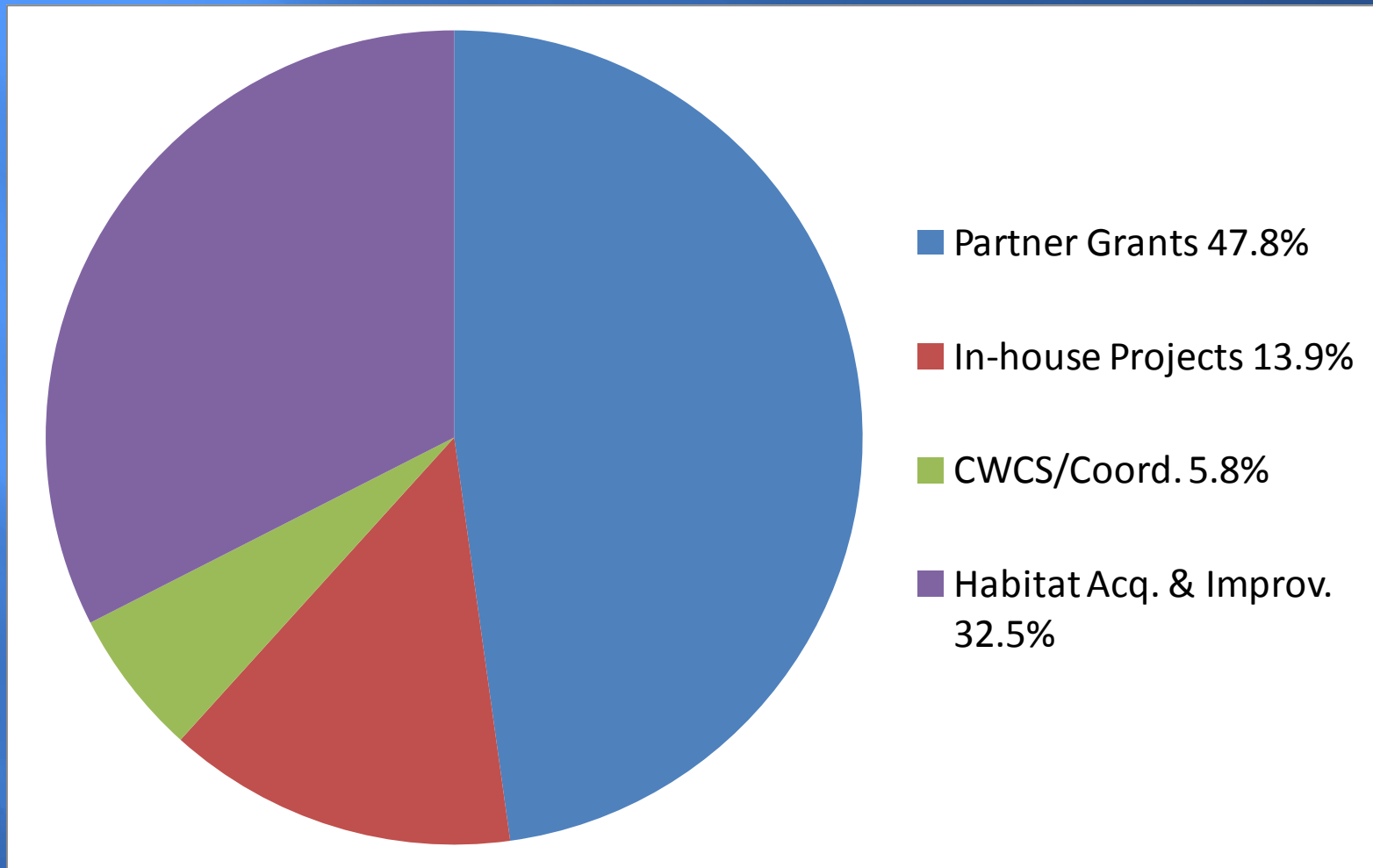
# Oklahoma Use of SWG Funding

To date (FY 2001 through FY 2013) Oklahoma has received approximately \$11,400,000

This has been used to support 58 field research projects, the development of the Oklahoma CWCS, six mapping and data management projects and four habitat acquisitions.



# Oklahoma Use of SWG Funding



# Oklahoma Use of SWG Funding

Current focus of State Wildlife Grants funding is on 21 species petitioned for federal listing.

All SWG reports are public documents; Reports for all SWG projects in Oklahoma are posted on the Okla. Dept. of Libraries website:

<http://www.crossroads.odl.state.ok.us>





# OCWCS Specifics

The Oklahoma CWCS / SWAP was developed over a two-year period (2004 & 2005)

- Advisory Committee with reps from 26 organizations, agencies & stakeholder groups
- two rounds of statewide meetings
- technical experts conference
- two rounds of public review and comments on intermediate drafts

All state CWCSs must be revised on at least a 10-year cycle;  
Comprehensive revision by  
October 2015



The terms “Oklahoma Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy” and “Oklahoma Wildlife Action Plan” can be used interchangeably.

Oklahoma SWAP / CWCS helps to articulate the need for conservation funding and is the guiding document for the use of State Wildlife Grants

Challenging because the funding available to implement the OCWCS is < 5 % of what is needed annually.



# OCWCS Specifics

Focused on the Needs of Rare and Declining  
Wildlife (Species of Greatest Conservation Need)



246 Species Identified

range across all taxonomic groups

(188 vertebrate & 58 invertebrate species)

(133 aquatic & 113 terrestrial species)

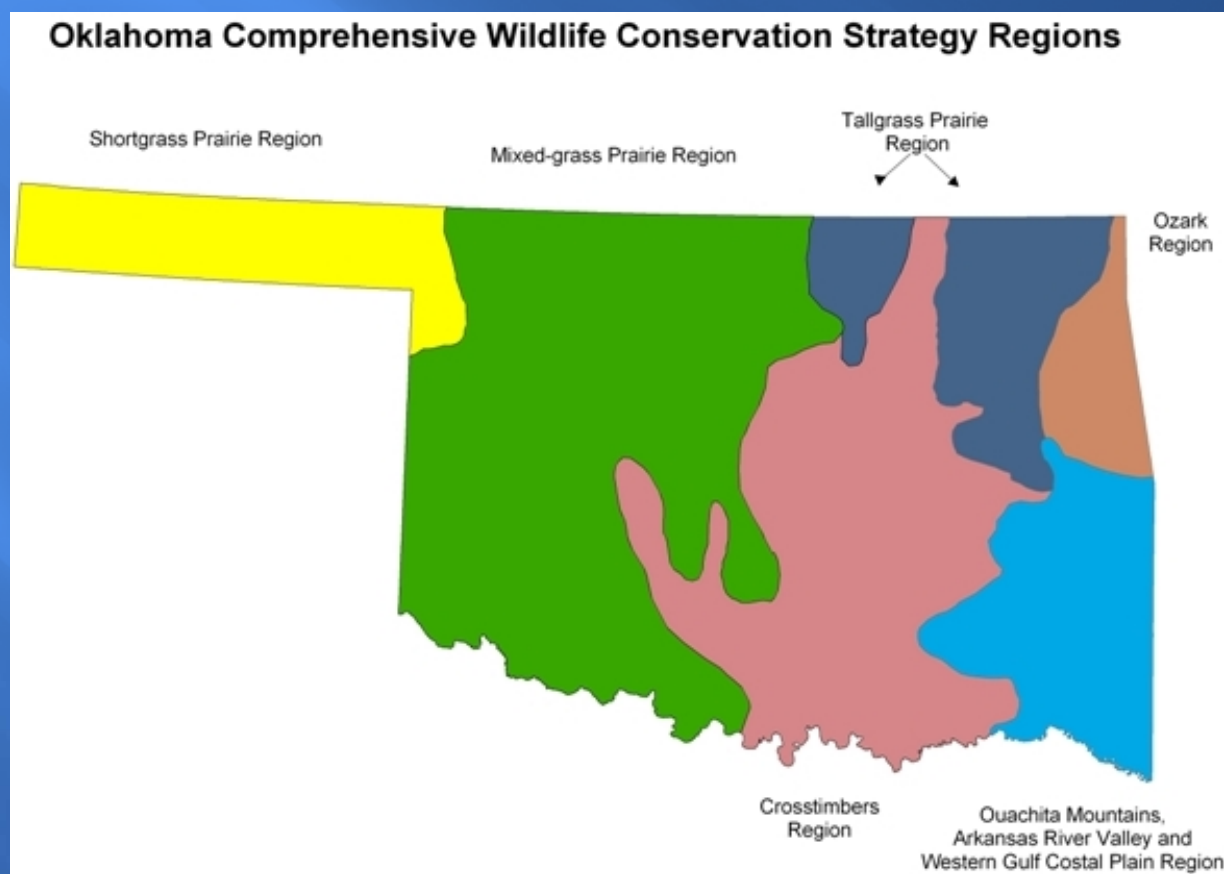
species grouped into suites by shared habitat needs

each evaluated on a 14-point score then placed into

one of three tiers of relative priority



Oklahoma CWCS is divided into six chapters  
based upon ecological regions



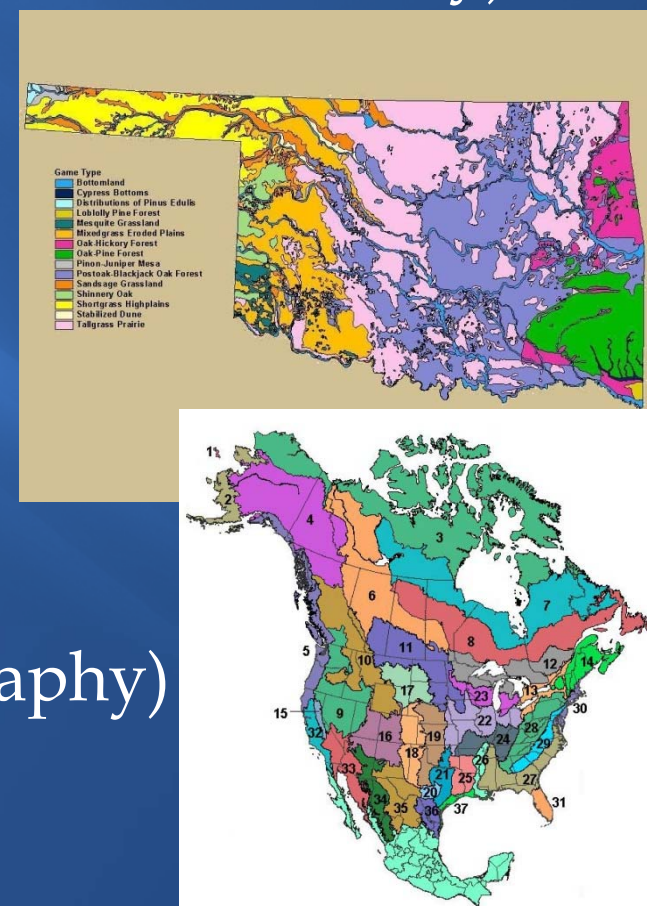
Ecological Regions are based upon a combination of:

Commonalities between the recognized ecological classification systems (Omernick and Bailey)

Soils

Vegetation communities

Bird Conservation Regions of  
the North American Bird  
Conservation Initiative  
(unified international geography)



# Within Each Ecological Region Chapter

Chapter divided into 7 to 11 subunits based on habitat type

Within each habitat type section:

- Habitat Description

- Species of Greatest Conservation Need

- Conservation Issues affecting SGCN

- Conservation Actions to Remedy each Issue

- Monitoring and Effectiveness Measures

- Potential Partners/Partnerships



Example: Ozark Region Identifies...  
107 Species of Conservation Need

24 – Tier I

49 – Tier II

34 – Tier III

Eleven Important Habitat Types

Five are considered very high priorities

Over 50 Conservation Issues

most transcend multiple habitats and species

Over 60 Conservation Actions (Recommendations)

many simultaneously address multiple issues

Over 30 Monitoring Measures

Fifty-eight Potential Partners/Partnerships



Example High Priority Habitat Type:  
Mesic White Oak/Hickory Forest



21 Species of Greatest Conservation Need

Cerulean Warbler

Worm-eating Warbler

Kentucky Warbler

Ringed Salamander

Oklahoma Salamander

Ozark Big-eared Bat



# Conservation Issues within Mesic White Oak/Hickory Forests:

Incomplete knowledge of habitat distribution and limited access for biological surveys

Conversion and fragmentation of mesic forest to/by pastureland, second-home development

Predominance of even-age stands due to widespread, historic tree harvest

Habitat encroachment and alteration by non-native plant species





# Conservation Actions within Mesic White Oak/Hickory Forest:

Map existing habitat and fill biological data gaps

Develop landowner incentives to retain or restore mesic deciduous forest

Maintain biologically meaningful tracts of mesic forest through conservation easements or cons. Acquisition

Develop landowner incentives to restore historic fire (increase) and grazing (decrease) patterns

Provide cost-share funding to diversify forest stand structure

Develop BMPs for forest management

Evaluate impacts of widespread invasive species



The Oklahoma CWCS is undergoing a comprehensive review.

- Process will continue through Summer of 2015
- Will involve stakeholder meetings
- Revised drafts, by chapter, will be available for public review and comments



# We need your help



Over the next 18 months:

- Review drafts of at least one revised regional chapter
- Look for missing or incomplete conservation issues
- Look for missing or incomplete conservation actions
- Review the list of species of greatest conservation need



# Additions at the Front-end of the CWCS:

- Re-evaluate the list of Species of Greatest Conservation Need to add and remove species as warranted (modify Appendices D & E).
- Add a short chapter on climate change adaptation (new USFWS requirement)
- Add an appendix for ecological information for selected Tier I and Tier II Species of Greatest Conservation Need



## Changes at the Region Level:

- Add a map or list of the existing conservation areas within each region (e.g. WMAs, federal Refuges, USFS lands and TNC preserves)
- Add a map depicting the approximate extent/distribution of each of the important habitat types in the region (for those that can be mapped).
- Add a map of recommended conservation opportunity areas or biologically unique landscapes in each region.
- Create a “Big Rivers” regional chapter for the large rivers that cross terrestrial ecological regions
- Update and improve the effectiveness monitoring recommendations and combine at the regional level rather than at the habitat level

## Changes at the Habitat Type Level:

- Update and standardize each of the habitat descriptions; include three to six photos depicting the range of structural conditions that are typical for each habitat
- Include a map (where feasible) of the distribution/ extent of each habitat type within the region with an overlay of existing conservation areas or proposed conservation opportunity areas
- For stream and river habitat types, add a list of the specific streams and rivers in the region
- Prioritize the Conservation Issues based on geographic area and number of SGCN affected; move from a bulleted list to narrative paragraphs
- Update/expand the lists of Conservation Actions
- Improve the species tables to better illustrate each species' status and abundance



Some aspects of the Oklahoma CWCS are unlikely to change substantially:

The first version adequately captured:

- the major conservation issues in our state
- the important habitat types/plant communities
- most of the species of greatest conservation need

The geographic layout of the Plan by ecological regions and habitat types has worked well.



The current version of the Oklahoma Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy can be viewed on the State Wildlife Grants page of ODWC's website at:

<http://www.wildlifedepartment.com/CWCS.htm>

To be notified of updates, please send e-mail to:

[mhowery@zoo.odwc.state.ok.us](mailto:mhowery@zoo.odwc.state.ok.us)

We look forward to future collaborations.

Questions?

