

NEWS AND UPDATES

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Originally posted on the Draft WWAP page on January 6, 2016. Re-posted here on November 10, 2016
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Corrections and edits in the final 2015-2025 Wisconsin Wildlife Action Plan

Posted September 10, 2016

This is a summary of the edits and corrections that are included in the final 2015-2025 Wisconsin Wildlife Action Plan. The changes were based on the USFWS Regional Review Team's March 14, 2016 recommendation letter as well as other edits or corrections identified when the plan was prepared for online posting. **No further changes will be made to the WWAP document. Future updates will only be made to the WWAP web pages and posted on the WWAP News and Updates page.**

1. Pages in Section 3 and Section 4, including blank pages, were renumbered sequentially.
2. The Table of Contents was reformatted and updated.
3. Title pages, headers and footers were updated to reflect the approved and final document status.
4. The threatened or endangered status of a species was split into two columns (WI Status THR/END and Federal Status LT/LE) on the following Tables:
 - a. Table 3.1.1 Mammal Species of Greatest Conservation Need
 - b. Table 3.2.1 Bird Species of Greatest Conservation Need
 - c. Table 3.3.1 Fish Species of Greatest Conservation Need
 - d. Table 3.4.1 Herptile Species of Greatest Conservation Need
 - e. Table 3.5.1 Invertebrate Species of Greatest Conservation Need
5. Pickerel frog, prairie skink and gray ratsnake are SGCNs. They were mistakenly recorded in the Draft WWAP as Species with Information Needs (SINS). All relevant tables and figures throughout the document were updated to reflect this correction. No changes were made to the discussion of Issues and Conservation Actions because those that were described for the herptile group as a whole were applicable to these three species.
6. In Table 4.4.1.2 the NC-EL opportunity score for (Small) Lake - Hard, Bog in the Southeast Glacial Plain was recorded in error and should have been "M" or score = 2.
7. Minor changes were made to format, font and wording in "Appendix 2.3 SGCN Selection Flowchart" to improve interpretation and clarity.

8. Updated State Rank definitions in “Table 2.10 NatureServe Definitions for State (S) Conservation Status Ranks” and “Appendix 2.3 SGCN Selection Flowchart” to eliminate discrepancies with other DNR web pages.
9. Common names were added to “Table 3.5.1 Invertebrate Species of Greatest Conservation Need”. Common names were not added to “Table 3.5.5 Invertebrate SINS” because many do not have distinguishing common names.
10. Footnotes were added to pages 3-1 and 4-2 to indicate that “threats”, “issues” and “challenges” are used interchangeably.
11. All figures showing the “Sum of Association Scores” were corrected because the low association scores (score=1) were mistakenly included in the sums. The figures were intended to show only the sums of species moderately (2) or highly (3) associated with an ecological landscape or natural community type (e.g., Figure 3.1.1).

Updates since the WWAP's approval in July 2016

Posted November 10, 2016

These updates were made only to information on the WWAP web pages. They are not included in the WWAP document. No further changes will be made to the WWAP document. Future updates will only be made to the WWAP web pages and posted on the WWAP News and Updates page.

Changes to natural community names

The NHI database supports the species and natural community biodiversity pages, as well as the Ecological Landscapes of Wisconsin and the WWAP. The names of some of the natural communities that were used in the WWAP were recently updated in the Natural Heritage Inventory database and are noted in this table, [Crosswalk of Natural Community Names](#).

Changes to natural community-ecological landscape (NC-EL) opportunity scores

Some NC-EL scores were updated after further verification against Natural Heritage Inventory element occurrences for the natural communities. We found that some natural communities that were scored a "0" in some ecological landscapes had current and valid recorded occurrences in the NHI database. In these cases NC-EL scores were changed from "0" to "1". In only the following case was the score changed from "0" to "2":

Element occurrence: CLBOG360WI
Natural Community: (Small) Lake – hard, bog
Ecological Landscape: Southeast Glacial Plain (SEGP)

This change was carried over into the summary tables and the ecological priorities tables, both of which are provided as downloadable documents on the WWAP main landing page under **Resources**.

Updated definitions and lists of three subcategories of Species with Information Needs (SINS) for each animal group

A third category of Species with Information Needs called "Monitoring SINS" has been added to the existing categories, BasicSINS and RankingSINS. This was done specifically to address species that were close to, but did not exceed the threshold for SGCN. In changing environmental conditions the status of species that are relatively stable may improve or it may degrade. The designation of MonitoringSINS is meant to catch the latter scenario.

SGCN taxa team leads updated the three types of SINS for each taxonomic group. In most cases, the changes were limited to the addition of MonitoringSINS, but in a few cases changes were made to the other two types. **The updated definitions are provided below.**

Go directly to Wisconsin's biodiversity information about SGCNs that can be found by selecting **Learn about Species of Greatest Conservation Need** on the right-hand menu of the WWAP main page. This will give you the option to select the animal group of interest. Among other things the list will distinguish species which belong to the three SINS categories. You may also download the **SGCN and species with information needs** database that can be found under **Resources** on the WWAP main page in which you can sort by animal group and the three SINS categories.

Updated definitions for species with information needs (SINS)

Species with information needs include those that either did not have sufficient information to evaluate them in the SGCN selection flowchart or, if they did, they did not meet the criteria for SGCN. There are three categories of SINS (BasicSINS, RankingSINS and MonitoringSINS) organized around fundamentally different types of information need. Their purpose is to help people organize their research and inventory goals and priorities. The definitions are not perfectly distinct and judgment is used by the taxon teams when assigning species to each group.

- **BasicSINS = Species for which there is little or no information or there is taxonomic uncertainty.** This category includes species with taxonomic questions or that need surveys for basic information on presence/absence or breeding/nonbreeding status in the state. The most important course of action for these species or groups of species is research and inventory to gather this basic information. Most species in this category have a [Natural Heritage conservation status rank](#) of SNR (not ranked, state conservation status not yet assessed), but may also be ranked SNA (not applicable because the element is not a suitable target for conservation activities, typically because it is non-native, accidental, irregular, a long-distance migrant/transitory, or the element's presence in Wisconsin is unconfirmed), SH (known only from historical records), or they may not have a status rank at all. Most BasicSINS are invertebrate insects.

Because different circumstances may lead to a species being ranked as SU, SNR, SNA or SH, not all species with these ranks will be identified as BasicSINS. For example, the SNA rank can be assigned when there is *adequate* information to tell us why a species is not a suitable target for conservation in our state (e.g., migratory bird species, one or two occurrences of a reptile that is not defined as native to Wisconsin) or it can be assigned when there is *inadequate* information to determine whether a species' range is expanding into our state. Species with SU, SNR, SNA or SH ranks may also be RankingSINS (see below) or neither.

- **RankingSINS = Species for which there is basic information, but not enough to assign a numerical rank.** With a reasonable amount of targeted effort we would get sufficient information about rarity, trends, and threats to allow us to assign a numerical rank and move them on or off the SGCN list. Like BasicSINS, species in this category are benefited by surveys or inventories, but the questions are usually more specific and may include measures to understand how a species is affected by environmental factors. Most of the species in this category have a Natural Heritage conservation status rank of SU (unrankable due to lack of

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information or to substantially conflicting information about status or trends) or SNA, but may also include species with status ranks SNR and SH. Different circumstances can lead to a rank of SU, SNR, SNA or SH such that not all species with these ranks fit this definition and some may be BasicSINS or neither.

- **MonitoringSINS = Species that have numerical conservation status ranks and sufficient information to assess them according to the SGCN selection flowchart, but did not meet the SGCN criteria.** This includes species that were “close” to meeting the SGCN criteria. Often these were species that the taxa teams found difficult to reach a consensus on. In contrast to other species that did not meet SGCN criteria, these species are in need of continued monitoring and should be reevaluated during interim SGCN list updates. They may be described in a number of ways such as possibly declining and with some uncertainty whether they are SGCN; recently or historically common in some cases due to large historic range or broad habitat preference, but showing declining trend data (sometimes difficult to quantify or based on expert knowledge); exhibiting population losses or range contraction. Species vulnerable to environmental changes due to disease, large- or broad-scale trends in land or resources use, climate change, etc. may be placed in this category. MonitoringSINS are typically ranked S3G5, S3S4G5 or S3?, but may also be ranked S4G4, S4G5 or S4? if data or expert and professional knowledge determine the immediacy and magnitude of declining trends warrant this.

All other species that are not SGCNs or SINS are treated as stable or common from the point of view of the WWAP’s goals. Based on research and professional and expert opinion of the species taxon teams, these species were not assessed using the NHI rank calculator or the SGCN flowchart. Species that are currently stable or common may be affected by environmental changes due to disease, large- or broad-scale trends in land or resources use, climate change, etc. Therefore, like all native species in the state, they will continue to have their status evaluated. The SGCN assessment process is fluid and the factors used to assess species can be reassessed at any time. We will have interim updates to the SGCN and SINS lists to accommodate new information as it becomes available.

Summary of public comments on the Draft 2015-2025 WWAP and results of follow-up feedback from the WWAP advisory team

Originally posted on the Draft WWAP page on January 6, 2016. Re-posted here on November 10, 2016

A draft of the Wisconsin Wildlife Action Plan (WWAP) and the Fish, Wildlife, and Habitat Management Plan (FW&HMP) were placed online for public comment for 33 days from July 28 – August 30, 2015. Notice of the opportunity to comment was posted on DNR's public notice page and sent via government email delivery service.

Of the 29 public comments received, 23 were applicable to the WWAP in some way. None of the commenters indicated their position as unconditionally opposed. Two marked their support conditional upon certain clarifications and commitments. Approximately eight commenters were explicit in their support and appreciation of the objectives of the WWAP. Of the 28 people who provided comment (one organization provided two comment submittals), 17 represented themselves and 11 represented an organization.

Comments on the WWAP were diverse, although the topic of forests and forestry accounted for the largest proportion of the comments (seven out of 29). Most comments were based on issues and conservation actions discussed in the WWAP or registered an interest in participating in WWAP development and implementation as we move forward. The second most commonly mentioned topic was concern about degraded aquatic habitats from pollution, eutrophication, reduced water levels and siltation of lakes and rivers and effects on rare species and fisheries. A few comments addressed specific species or groups of species, particularly birds, insects, snails and mussels. And finally, some commenters called our attention to how fire is used as a management tool, the benefits of organic and sustainable farming and the overall importance of our planning efforts for helping species of greatest conservation need and their habitats.