



Chapter 8

Revision Process and Outreach





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Introduction

Although the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (MD DNR) was the lead on the development of the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP or Plan), this Plan serves as a *statewide* guidance document for use by all agencies and organizations that work to conserve Maryland’s species and habitats. Actions included in the Plan (Appendices 6a and 6b) are meant to be implemented by a wide range of partners, across Maryland and beyond. Furthermore, the 2025 revision of Maryland’s SWAP would not have been possible without the hundreds of volunteer hours provided by partner organizations, academics, community scientists, and more.

This chapter begins with a brief overview of MD DNR’s conservation partners, regardless of whether they directly contributed to the SWAP revision’s content. Specifically, it describes coordination with federal, state, and local agencies and Native American tribes that manage significant land and water areas within the state and/or administer programs that affect the conservation of Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) and their key wildlife habitats (KWHs) (**Element #7**). This chapter then provides a thorough description of the partner and public participation process in the review and revision phases of Maryland’s SWAP (**Elements #7 and #8**). A full list of organizations that participated in the 2025 SWAP revision can be found in Appendix 8a. Details on how partners and the public will be involved in the Plan’s implementation can be found in Chapter 9.

Maryland Department of Natural Resource’s Partners in Conservation

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources collaborates with numerous partners in natural resource conservation efforts. Such partnerships are essential to support the research, communication, and action that drive wildlife conservation at local, state, national, and international levels. A summary of these partnerships and their functions are described in the following section, followed by a brief discussion of non-governmental conservation partners.

Nearly all SGCN and key wildlife habitats (KWHs) extend beyond Maryland’s borders, making partnerships a necessity for successful natural resource conservation. At the national level, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) are the lead agencies for the conservation of federal trust species found in Maryland and elsewhere. The USFWS, National Park Service (NPS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) are also among the federal landowners in Maryland, managing key habitats on the ground to protect fish and wildlife resources. MD DNR regularly collaborates with these and other federal agencies (e.g., Department of Defense installations, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers [ACOE]) to implement restoration projects and manage habitats on their lands (i.e., direct management of natural resources). The ACOE, for example, is instrumental in assisting the state to restore habitats like Small Coastal Plain Islands, as well as larger Artificial Impoundments and Wetlands such as Hart-Miller Island and Poplar Island in the Chesapeake Bay. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) are key partners with Maryland in improving the water quality and resources of the Chesapeake Bay, as are the five other states in the Chesapeake Bay watershed and local governments in these states. The USFWS, NOAA, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) provide technical and financial assistance to the state, its partners, and its citizens to manage, enhance, and restore fish and wildlife resources and habitats.



On a regional level, state conservation agencies in the Northeast have established a broad range of partnerships for fish, wildlife, and habitat conservation, including Partners in Flight for birds, Northeast Partners for Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, Northeast Bat Working Group, the Joint Ventures and Atlantic Coast Fish Habitat Partnership for migratory bird and fish conservation, and the U.S. Department of the Interior’s Landscape Conservation Cooperatives. Regional coordinating bodies, such as the Northeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (NEAFWA) and its Fish and Wildlife Diversity Technical Committee (NEFWDTC), which operate on a separate and broader level than the individual partnerships, have been a driving force behind these and other wildlife conservation initiatives. Wildlife management agencies from the states of Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, and West Virginia, as well as the District of Columbia participate in NEAFWA. NEAFWA, one of four regional affiliates of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA), is tasked with promoting and coordinating conservation activities across the Northeast U.S. The NEFWDTC has led wildlife diversity conservation projects for the NEAFWA and is composed of the Wildlife Diversity representative from each Northeast state and the District of Columbia. Maryland is also a member of the Northeast Section of the NatureServe Network, which has affiliates in most state agencies or other institutions (e.g., universities) throughout North America. Member organizations of this Network compile and analyze species and natural community data in a standardized data system, and develop status assessment information (e.g., global and state conservation status ranks) for imperiled resources.

Aside from the regional coordinating bodies, the Chesapeake Bay watershed also has several regional partnerships that focus on funding, developing, and implementing plans and projects in and around the Chesapeake Bay. These include the Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP), Chesapeake Bay Commission (CBC), Chesapeake Watershed Investments for Landscape Defense (WILD) Program, Chesapeake Conservation Partnership (CCP), Susquehanna River Basin Commission (SRBC), Chesapeake Conservancy, Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF), and various Waterkeeper groups. These groups provide much-needed coordination, funding, legislation, advocacy, and more for natural resources in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

At the state level, MD DNR collaborates with the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) on water quality issues, wetland conservation, review of permits, and Bay restoration projects. The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) and other state agencies work with MD DNR to protect fish and wildlife resources by avoiding, minimizing, and mitigating impacts during the construction of state-permitted projects. The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) oversees the state’s aquaculture programs, manages pest species and animal health, and collaborates with MD DNR and private landowners in nutrient management, land preservation, invasive species management, pest management, habitat restoration, and wildlife enhancement projects.

Although currently no Native American tribes indigenous to Maryland are federally recognized, the state officially recognized the Piscataway Indian Nation and the Piscataway-Conoy Tribe in 2012, the latter of which includes three subtribes. This was followed by recognition of the Accohannock Tribe in late 2017 (MSA 2026). The Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs (MCIA) serves all American Indian/Alaska Native people of the state. Its threefold mission is to



(1) serve the interests of the Native American communities in Maryland, partially through aiding in the process of obtaining legal recognition; (2) promote awareness and better understanding the contributions of Native Americans to Maryland, both historic and contemporary; and (3) assist state, local, and private agencies in providing the necessary resources to address the educational, social, and economic needs of Native American communities (GOCI 2026). As the representative entity for these indigenous stakeholders, MCIA was invited to participate in the SWAP process and review the draft material for the Plan.

At the local level, MD DNR collaborates with 23 county agencies and Baltimore City, plus over 150 local municipalities. Collaborative efforts include various planning and zoning requirements, such as the development of local Comprehensive Plans, as well as more detailed Land Preservation and Recreation Plans. MD DNR frequently provides technical guidance to assist with the conservation of the state’s fish and wildlife resources and the key habitats they depend upon. For instance, the establishment of Habitat Protection Areas provides protection for and information about areas important for conservation within the Critical Area of the Chesapeake Bay and Atlantic Coastal Bays. Coordination at the local level includes communication with county staff in fields related to environmental protection and resource management. The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission is another partner agency that develops and operates public park systems and provides local land use planning for the great majority of both Montgomery and Prince George’s counties. All other Maryland counties and Baltimore City manage open spaces that contribute to wildlife conservation, and over 30 nature centers operated by local governments provide important opportunities for environmental education.

The successful conservation of fish and wildlife resources in Maryland would not be possible without partnerships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), universities, private industry, academia, and the public. To name a few, The Nature Conservancy, Maryland Coastal Bays Program, Audubon Mid-Atlantic, Maryland Ornithological Society, Maryland Bird Conservation Partnership, Ducks Unlimited, Quail Forever, Maryland Native Plant Society, Maryland Biodiversity Project, Natural History Society of Maryland, Sierra Club, Susquehannock Wildlife Society, Izaak Walton League, various land trusts, various river/waterkeepers, and other NGOs are not only stakeholders in the protection of the state’s natural resources, but also valuable partners in planning, funding, and implementing conservation projects. All of these organizations were invited to participate in the 2025 SWAP revision process, and the vast majority were able to do so.

MD DNR maintains ongoing partnerships with universities, museums, zoos, botanical gardens, and experts statewide, as well as in surrounding states. For example, MD DNR works with University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science Appalachian Lab, Towson University, Frostburg State University, Maryland Zoo, Oglebay Good Zoo in West Virginia, Schiele Museum of Natural History & Planetarium in North Carolina, and Mt. Cuba Center botanical gardens in Delaware on various research projects involving SGCN and key wildlife habitats. Taxonomic experts from the Smithsonian Institution and private consultants have assisted with projects and conservation planning. Industry representatives from timber companies, the energy sector, and development interests assist the state in conserving fish and wildlife resources on private lands. Perhaps the most important of all partners, the citizens of Maryland provide the



state with opportunities to protect natural resources on private property and benefit from grass-roots efforts to monitor threats, assess ecosystem health, enhance key wildlife habitats, and improve species populations.

Coordination with Partners and the Public in the SWAP Development Process

MD DNR’s Natural Heritage Program (NHP) in its Wildlife and Heritage Service (WHS) coordinated Maryland’s SWAP revision. Like the previous SWAP revision process, a project coordinator was hired to oversee the process and an informal development team. A number of MD DNR staff—most from NHP, though not all—were considered the lead points of contact for various taxonomic groups. This group of “taxa team leads,” along with some supporting staff, became the informal development team over the course of the revision process. Table 8.1 contains the list of these lead MD DNR staff members, although many more MD DNR staff contributed to the SWAP than are included in this table.

Table 8.1 Lead MD DNR SWAP team members

Name	Position Title	MD DNR Unit/Program
Mimi Sanford	SWAP Coordinator	WHS NHP
Matt Ashton	Natural Resources Biologist	RAS*
Gwen Brewer	Science Program Manager	WHS NHP
Lynn Davidson	Conservation Technology Manager	WHS NHP
Brian Durkin	Natural Resources Biologist	WHS NHP
Max Ferlauto	State Entomologist	WHS NHP
Chris Frye	State Botanist	WHS NHP
Mark Hall	Central Region Ecologist	WHS NHP
Chloe Jacobson	Marine Mammal & Sea Turtle Stranding Response Biologist	FABS*
Jay Kilian	Natural Resources Biologist	RAS MBSS*
Dana Limpert	Eastern Region Ecologist	WHS NHP
Jason McNees	Information Manager	WHS NHP
Beth Schlimm	State Herpetologist	WHS NHP
Kevin Stohlgren	State Zoologist	WHS NHP
Joshua Tabora	Furbearer Biologist	WHS Game Management
Amanda Weschler	Marine Mammal & Sea Turtle Stranding Coordinator	FABS*
Angel Willey	Coastal Fisheries Program Manager	FABS*
Megan Zagorski	Western Region Ecologist	WHS NHP

* = Resource Assessment Service (RAS), Maryland Biological Stream Survey (MBSS), Fishing and Boating Services (FABS)

Maryland’s 2025 SWAP revision process began with internal MD DNR WHS kickoff meetings in the late fall of 2024. The effort to obtain input was then expanded to non-WHS staff, established MD DNR partners, new potential partners, academics, community scientists, and other partners through a series of emails, personal contacts, and meetings. For more information as to how the list of invitees was determined and how this outreach was conducted, please see the “Outreach and Coordination for the 2025 SWAP” section later in this chapter.



The three major SWAP sections most in need of stakeholder input during the revision process were the SGCN, threats, and conservation actions. The processes undertaken to determine the content of these sections are described below.

The Process for Identifying SGCN for the 2025 SWAP

Selection of SGCN in Maryland began with reviewing the previous 2015 SGCN list. Review of these species, using the guidance criteria explained in Chapter 3, provided an introductory understanding of species changes over the last ten years. Decisions about which species to include on the draft 2025 SGCN list relied heavily on a review of the species' current conservation status, based on both state and global conservation ranks. The best available quantitative and qualitative data regarding status, abundance, distribution, and population trends for many species in the state were considered to confirm conservation status and preliminary SGCN selection. Further justification for changes (i.e., additions and deletions) to the 2015 SGCN list, other than changes in conservation or legal status, included new discoveries and research findings since 2015; an increase (or decrease) of existing threats (e.g., illegal trade, habitat loss/fragmentation); and new, emerging threats (e.g., novel pathogens, energy sector changes, loss of host species due to non-native pests). In addition, species on the Northeast regional SGCN (RSGCN) list and priority species from taxa-specific groups, conservation partners, and regional conservation plans were evaluated for inclusion on Maryland's 2025 SGCN list.

New to the 2025 SWAP is the State Assessment Priority Species (SAPS) list. The inclusion of this list was recommended by the “2022 Northeast Lexicon” (Crisfield & NEFWDTC 2022). It is essentially a list for data deficient species for which more information is needed to fully understand their status, trends, and associated threats and actions. Therefore, part of the SGCN list review involved the selection of which data deficient species from the 2015 SWAP belonged on the SAPS list, as well as which new species should be added. For a more detailed explanation of the SAPS list and the criteria used to determine its contents, please refer to Chapter 3. For the full SGCN and SAPS lists, see Appendices 3a and 3b.

This initial review of the SGCN list was done through a series of “taxa team” meetings led by the MD DNR staff listed in Table 8.1. Most of these meetings were held in the winter of 2024–2025. In order to accommodate the needs of the different taxa teams, meetings ranged in length from day-long to one hour, in format from in-person to virtual, and in size from fewer than 10 attendees to more than 40. These meetings were split based on taxonomic groups and included, in chronological order:

- Freshwater mussels
- Mammals (small mammals and carnivores)
- Bats
- Crayfish
- Freshwater fish
- Marine/tidal fish
- Moths
- Aquatic insects (mayflies, stoneflies, and caddisflies)



- Butterflies
- Herpetofauna (amphibians, turtles, and snakes/lizards)
- Beetles
- Dragonflies and damselflies
- Cave and groundwater invertebrates
- Fireflies
- Birds
- Bees

Prospective meeting attendees were provided with the relevant taxonomic group’s 2015 SGCN list (and, in most cases, the 2015 threat–action list as well; see below for more details) in advance, as well as a brief explanation regarding the criteria for the SGCN and SAPS lists. During the meetings, after an overview of the meeting’s goals and the criteria for each list, team leads led attendees through species on the 2015 SGCN list one-by-one, reviewing changes to each species’ various statuses/ranks, abundance, distribution, trends, and associated threats. Meetings also included the review of species for addition that had been suggested in advance by team leads and attendees. The process of determining the species lists for plants and some groups of invertebrates was slightly different; please see Chapter 3 for more details.

Species from the 2015 SGCN list that no longer met the criteria were either removed or moved to the SAPS list; species that were deemed to meet the guidelines for listing as SGCN in this revision were added; and data deficient species of concern were added to the SAPS list. All species that were removed, moved to the SAPS list, or are new additions to either list have the reasoning behind that decision included in Appendices 3a, 3b, or 3c. For species that were suggested later in the revision process (i.e., after the taxa team meetings), MD DNR staff reviewed each additional suggestion, including external stakeholders and experts in the discussion when needed. All participants had the opportunity to review the final SGCN and SAPS lists in early 2026, and edits were made to both lists based on feedback.

Partners in this process included other agency staff as well as external stakeholders and individuals who are recognized as experts in their fields. Many of these individuals are affiliated with major universities, institutions, government agencies, and conservation organizations active in conserving these species in Maryland and the Northeast region. The invite list was based on the list of contacts from the 2015 SWAP, heavily augmented with new suggestions from MD DNR staff and additional research. Out of the approximately 250 individuals that were contacted, nearly 150 people from more than 60 organizations and programs participated in the species review process. This is true for the species-level threat and action review process as well; see more details below. A full list of participating organizations can be found in Appendix 8a.

The Process for Developing Threats and Conservation Actions for the 2025 SWAP

For the 2025 SWAP revision, threats and corresponding actions were split into two levels: species and habitat. They were therefore reviewed, revised, and added to based on this distinction. The species-level threats and actions were generally reviewed either at the same time or shortly after the initial taxa team meetings described above. This review followed a similar format: invitees were provided with the applicable list(s) of 2015 threat–action pairs in advance,



asked to review them before the meetings, and collaboratively updated the list during the meetings, including the assignment of each threat–action pair to specific SGCN. After this round of meetings, MD DNR staff continued to refine and make changes as needed and prioritized actions according to the process outlined in Chapter 6. All participants had the opportunity to review the final species-level threats and actions lists in early 2026, and edits were made according to feedback. The resulting detailed lists of threats and actions can be found in Appendix 6a.

As with the species lists, the threat and action revision process for some groups of invertebrates was also different; please see Chapter 3 for more details. The bird-focused meeting differed in scope as well. Given the size of the meeting group (>40), the number of bird species on the SGCN list (>140), and the wide range of threats and actions that affect this taxonomic group, it was decided that the meeting would focus mainly on threats and actions on a larger scale. This day-long, in-person workshop therefore asked attendees to discuss threats and actions regarding vulnerable groups of birds as opposed to individual species. This is reflected in the bird-specific threat–action pairs in Appendix 6a, which assign actions to groups of birds with similar characteristics rather than to individual species. Finally, given their intrinsic ties to their habitats, plants were not assigned species-specific threats and actions. Instead, their needs have been included within the habitat-level threats and actions.

Habitat-level threats and actions were reviewed and revised somewhat differently than for species. This is in large part because habitats lack the structure of taxonomic group expertise. In other words, while it can be relatively straightforward to identify and contact a group of herpetologists to review herpetofauna-specific content, stakeholders for marshes, forests, and other groups of habitats span a wide range of backgrounds and expertise, making it difficult to identify where individuals’ and organizations’ interests lie from an outside perspective. This necessitated more of a self-selection process from partners.

These habitat-level threats and actions were reviewed and revised during a series of day-long, in-person regional meetings attended by MD DNR staff and partners. One meeting was held for each region of Maryland: eastern, southern, central, and western. For further explanation of these regions, please see Chapter 2; Figure 2.2 contains a map of the four regions of Maryland. In order to address every habitat in the SWAP, habitat groups, specific KWHs, and topic areas were assigned to each meeting based on relevance to that region of Maryland. Subterranean habitats, for example, were discussed at the western Maryland meeting, and threats related to urban and suburban habitats were a topic of discussion at the meeting in central Maryland. This meant that all habitats and threat categories were addressed over the course of the four meetings. Additionally, some habitat groups and topics, such as forests and pollution, were discussed at every meeting due to their prevalence throughout the state.





*Morning session of the central Maryland meeting
(Mimi Sanford, MD DNR)*



*Afternoon session of the southern Maryland meeting
(Mimi Sanford, MD DNR)*

Each meeting cycled through selected sets of habitats and topics known to be relevant to that region. Attendees were allowed to self-assign to groups. In the morning session, attendees were asked to split into one of four habitat groups; in the afternoon session, they were asked to do the same for one of three or four topic groups. For example, during the morning session of the central Maryland meeting, attendees could choose between groups focused on forests, aquatic habitats, working lands, or urban and suburban habitats. In the afternoon, they could choose between groups concerned with land use conversion, waterway alteration and pollution, outreach and coordination, and a general “other” category for those whose interests did not align with the other three groups. Each session was 90 minutes long; attendees were allowed to switch groups halfway through each session if desired.

Morning sessions began with a review of habitat-level threats and actions from Maryland’s 2015 SWAP, which had been sorted based on habitat group, written on pieces of paper, and posted on walls around the room. Attendees were asked to review these threats and

actions and update them as needed. For example, if an action had already been completed or was no longer appropriate, it could be removed from the wall. If a threat was still present but its action needed to be changed, attendees could write their own action card and tape it over the old one. Participants were also provided with an assortment of paper and markers in order to “fill in the gaps,” adding new threats and actions to their group’s wall as needed.

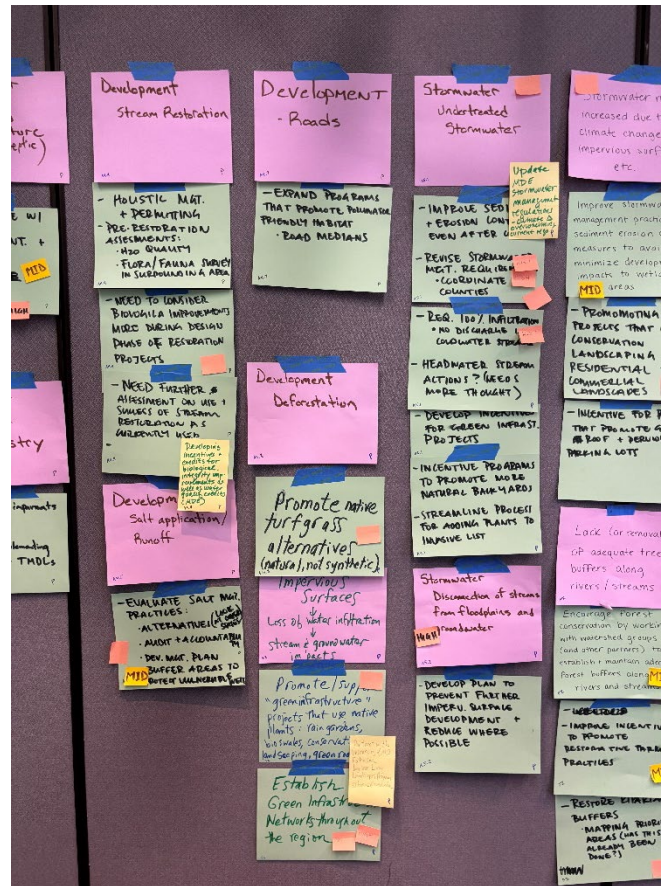
During lunch, MD DNR staff took down the written threats and actions and re-sorted them based on the afternoon session topics. For example, to use the above example of central Maryland, a threat–action pair related to agricultural land loss from the working lands morning group would be placed in the land use conversion group in the afternoon. Afternoon groups were then asked to



review the re-sorted content, continue to add and edit as needed, and then prioritize the actions using different colors of sticky notes. See the “Prioritizing Habitat-Level Actions” subsection of Chapter 6 for more information on this process.

After each meeting, threats and actions were typed up and sent back to attendees for confirmation and clarification. Between the four regional meetings, this resulted in 500 total threats and actions. However, many of these actions were either very similar to each other or already addressed in the species-level actions. After careful consolidation, the final list of actions best taken at the state, regional, and habitat levels numbered closer to 200. MD DNR staff then worked to refine these actions’ KWH associations. All participants had the opportunity to review this consolidated and refined threat–action list in early 2026; again, edits were made according to feedback. The resulting list of threats and actions can be found in Appendix 6b. Refer to Chapter 6 for more information on how these actions are organized, how they were prioritized, and how they differ from the threats and actions in the 2015 SWAP revision.

Participants in this process included experts who had already contributed to the species content as well as additional partner organizations and individuals. The list of invitees was expanded to include stakeholders with a more general interest in conservation work (i.e., those not as focused on a particular taxonomic group) through additional research and suggestions from MD DNR staff. Invitees were also asked to forward invitations to their own contacts. Similar to the species-specific content, participants tended to be affiliated with major universities, institutions, government agencies, and conservation organizations. Out of the more than 300 individuals contacted, 100 people from across more than 50 organizations attended these regional meetings. A full list of participating organizations can be found in Appendix 8a.



Threats (purple) and actions (green) from the central Maryland meeting, prior to digitization and consolidation (Mimi Sanford, MD DNR)

Outreach and Coordination for the 2025 SWAP

As discussed earlier in this Chapter, MD DNR works with a diversity of stakeholders who passionately work to conserve species and habitats. The involvement of federal and state agencies, local organizations, academic institutions, citizens, and Native American tribes in both the 2005 and 2015 SWAPs made them successful in terms of having an impact on conservation efforts. Along with the desire to build on these past successes, MD DNR identified



implementation of the SWAP’s priorities as one of its major goals for the 2025 SWAP process. Since people are much more likely to implement a plan that they had a hand in creating, an effort was made to include an even greater number and range of stakeholders than in past SWAP revisions.

Outreach and coordination early in the SWAP process focused on informing and engaging stakeholders. Later in the process, efforts focused on involving as many individuals and organizations as possible in the revision of the SWAP’s content, as well as keeping past participants up to date on the SWAP’s process. Near the end, efforts turned to promote partner and public review of the Plan. An assortment of outreach techniques and tools were used to maximize coordinated input to partners and the public in the development of the 2025 SWAP. Examples of these tools include:

- Informational meetings and presentations
- Stakeholder input meetings/workshops (as described in previous sections)
- Personal contact and correspondence (e.g., emails, phone calls, one-on-one meetings)
- Wide distribution of public participation through email blasts, events, newsletters, press releases, and social media
- SWAP website with online comment form
- Public comment period

Informational meetings and presentations

MD DNR WHS sought out opportunities to present information about the SWAP to a number of audiences. The SWAP Coordinator and additional WHS staff used these opportunities to present information about the SWAP, provide information about ways to participate in Plan development and implementation, and seek feedback. Some of these presentations were organized by the SWAP revision team; others were at the request of partners and other interested groups.

Presentations organized by the revision team included meetings with programs within or directly tied to MD DNR (e.g., the MD DNR Climate Team, Watershed & Climate Services, Critical Area Commission, Wildlife Advisory Commission) as well as affiliated groups like the USFWS, Maryland-Delaware Wildlife Society, and Society of American Foresters. Some groups also approached MD DNR to request similar presentations for their members. These groups included the Sierra Club Conservation Committee and Harford County Environmental Advisory Board.

Stakeholder input meetings/workshops

The various forms of stakeholder meeting used throughout the SWAP process are described above. The main goal of these meetings was to review, revise, and add to the “core content” (i.e., the species, threats, and actions) from the 2015 SWAP. Approximately 200 individuals from across 100 organizations contributed to this content; about 20% of that group contributed to both the species- and habitat-level content review.

In addition to these meetings, MD DNR also held some preliminary meetings regarding the 14 priority topic areas identified in Chapter 5. Virtual meetings were held for seven of these 14 areas in order to collect more detailed information on what work is already being done, what needs to be done in the future, and what would make such work easier to accomplish. More than 100 individuals from across 50 organizations attended this round of meetings. About half of



these attendees had not participated in the SWAP process before this point, bringing the number of direct participants in Maryland’s 2025 SWAP revision process to more than 250 people.

Personal contact and correspondence

Throughout the SWAP revision process, the SWAP Coordinator and other MD DNR staff engaged in personal contact and correspondence with conservation partners and other interested groups and community members. These communications included one-on-one meetings, phone calls, and emails regarding input to and implementation of the Plan. An effort was made to assist partners with tasks not directly related to the SWAP as well. For example, SWAP revision team members met with a group of interested citizens to discuss ways that groups can use MD DNR’s online tools (e.g., [MERLIN Online](#)) to prioritize their own conservation efforts. In addition to building relationships and community, these sorts of efforts increase the likelihood that organizations and individuals will assist in implementing the SWAP’s goals in the future.

Wide distribution of public participation opportunities

To inform and encourage broad public participation, MD DNR widely distributed news and information updates concerning the 2025 SWAP revision. Outreach staff displayed information encouraging public participation in the SWAP at numerous events, including the Maryland State Fair, with an estimated attendance of 4,500. At least 10 public speaking engagements also included a mention of the SWAP, further encouraging public participation. The final draft of the Plan revision was sent as mass email blasts to numerous outlets, including the list of conservation partners asked to help evaluate SGCN, workshop invitees, and the Master Naturalists listserv, which has nearly 3000 subscribers. MD DNR also posted about the SWAP revision to Facebook. Finally, MD DNR issued a press release to announce the final draft of 2025 SWAP revision and its public comment period.

SWAP website with online comment form

A dedicated State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) website was created in 2015 to more effectively disseminate information to a large and diverse audience and to receive and address public comments. The 2015 SWAP website was kept online for the public to use as a reference in the revision process until March 2026, when the page was updated and consolidated to reflect the revised Plan. The [updated website](#) contains background information about State Wildlife Action Plans, State Wildlife Grant funding, criteria for SGCN selection, and information about the revision process and public participation. In March 2026, an easy-to-use comment form for public input was placed on the site with the complete draft of the 2025 Plan. Written comments were received through the online comment form as well as by phone and email.

Public comment period

The draft of Maryland’s State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) was posted on the MD DNR SWAP website during the development of the Plan. It was posted online in March 2026 and the official 30-day public comment period extended from then to April 2026. To announce the public comment period, press releases were sent to media outlets and emails were sent to all conservation partners involved in SWAP development, including workshop participants. During this 30-day period, MD DNR received, reviewed, and incorporated an additional 30 comments. Many of these comments resulted in changes such as new or edited threat-action pairs, additional clarifying language, and more explicit mention of some recent regulation changes in Maryland.



Most notably, approximately 12 threat-action pairs were changed or added to the 2025 SWAP as a result of these comments.

Throughout the process, the SWAP Coordinator reviewed all comments by both partners and the public, and those related to specific issues (e.g., individual SGCN) were reviewed by the most suitable SWAP Development Team member to ensure comments were evaluated and assessed fairly and accurately. This SWAP process was designed to include the continued input from all stakeholders and to keep the public informed through outlets such as social media posts, email blasts, and newsletter articles.

This chapter provided information pertinent to **Elements #7 and #8** regarding the coordination and participation with partners and the public on Maryland’s SWAP review and revision. MD DNR’s current partners were summarized and more detailed information on the 2025 SWAP development process was presented. Chapter 9 covers information on the review and revision of the next State Wildlife Action Plan in 2035 (**Element #6**) along with plans for implementation of the 2025 SWAP revision.



Citations and Sources

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