



Chapter 9

Review, Revision, and Implementation





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Introduction

Maryland represents an extraordinary ecological crossroads and is unique in its location in the North American landscape. The State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP or Plan) will guide the next 10 years of state-level wildlife conservation to protect these diverse natural resources. Focused and well-planned efforts can lead to healthy animal populations and a healthier environment for Maryland’s citizens. Strategic implementation, periodic plan review, and resulting adaptive management make this document a long-term tool for wildlife conservation in Maryland. For more details on adaptive management, please refer to Chapter 7.

This final chapter provides an overview of the future of Maryland’s SWAP. First, it addresses how the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (MD DNR) intends to implement the Plan over the next 10 years with the help of partners, stakeholders, and the general public (addressing **Elements #7 and #8**). It then describes how Maryland will review and revise its SWAP within the next 10 years (addressing **Element #6**), including minor reviews within the typical 10-year major revision cycle.

Implementation

Effective implementation of Maryland’s SWAP will require many actions, but three basic objectives must be met: (1) participation from partner organizations, (2) increased visibility and usability, and (3) the availability of nongame funding sources over the next decade. Maryland’s 2025 SWAP revision was purposely developed to facilitate the involvement of a broad spectrum of partners, stakeholders, and staff in both creation and implementation. This was partially done through the involvement of as many partners as possible, as people are much more likely to implement a plan that they had a hand in creating. For more details on the partner participation process, please refer to Chapter 8.

Not every partner could be involved in the SWAP revision process. Therefore, potential partners for implementation were identified for conservation actions by meeting participants, especially for the taxonomic group-specific actions. Some of these potential partners are not currently conducting or leading priority conservation efforts recommended in the MD SWAP. MD DNR intends to better connect with these groups in order to discuss possible project implementation, especially for the actions determined to be high priority. MD DNR will also continue to reach out to current and potential partners who work at all geographic scales to discuss next steps for implementation of priority actions and to plan for future conservation projects. Although these potential implementation partners are not listed in the public-facing SWAP, MD DNR and partners have access to this information and will be reaching out to these potential partners as needed.

As MD DNR’s Wildlife & Heritage Service (WHS), specifically WHS’s Natural Heritage Program (NHP), is the entity responsible for coordinating Maryland’s SWAP, NHP will be the lead on organizing implementation of the Plan. Along with reaching out to potential implementation partners for specific actions, as described above, this will entail leading increased conversation and coordination efforts regarding the 14 priority threat areas and resource needs described in Chapter 5. Some of this work has already begun; for example, in late 2025, MD DNR collected detailed information from partners regarding their work in these 14 areas. This included which of the 14 topic areas each partner works in, as well as the type of



work that they are carrying out (e.g., advocacy, land preservation, data collection, education). Based on that information, virtual meetings were held for seven of these 14 areas 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. Though not all of these results are included in the 2025 SWAP revision, MD DNR will continue to initiate and expand discussions for all of these topic areas. Specific plans for next steps include:

- New standing meetings, workshops, or conferences that bring together partners with a wide range of expertise and backgrounds to address these priority threat areas in a multidisciplinary platform;
- One-time summits to address more urgent needs, such as the disappearance of Small Coastal Plain Islands and lack of funding;
- Assisting with the creation of regional or statewide coordination bodies, such as a Maryland-specific Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM), that would allow partner organizations to better work together, share resources, and complete larger-scale projects; and,
- Improved communication with and utilization of existing partner networks, such as the [Delmarva Restoration and Conservation Network](#) (DRCN).

Networks like DRCN allow partners to strengthen conservation efforts on the landscape scale by coordinating efforts and pooling resources. Created in 2017, DRCN is a regional conservation collaborative that brings together partners from across a range of disciplines to address the most pressing conservation needs on the Delmarva Peninsula. It includes local, state, and federal government agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that work throughout the region, with its main goals being the identification, protection, and restoration of the most important places to protect. Partners also work to obtain support and funding for voluntary restoration and conservation on the Delmarva Peninsula. MD DNR will work more closely with existing networks like DRCN and identify gaps in coordination where new networks could help meet these regional needs. To support the regional implementation of SWAPs, Maryland will provide updated information for regional databases and other regional projects including that of the Northeast Fish and Wildlife Diversity Technical Committee and any national databases coordinated by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies or other organizations.

MD DNR also plans to increase the SWAP’s visibility and usability amongst local partners and the general public. This will be done in a variety of ways. The principal effort will be a web-enabled version of Maryland’s 2025 SWAP revision. This will allow MD DNR staff, partners, and members of the public to more easily view the contents of the SWAP. For example, a web-enabled SWAP will allow users to more easily search for a species’ threats, actions, and habitat associations without requiring the cross-referencing of multiple chapters and appendices. The content of the SWAP will also be “repackaged” into various documents depending on partners’ needs. For example, during the previous SWAP revision process, MD DNR worked with the Maryland Bird Conservation Partnership (MBCP) to create a short booklet titled “Conserving Maryland’s Birds and their Habitats.” This booklet drew from the most crucial bird species, threats, and actions in the 2015 SWAP and summarized the information in a 12-page document for bird-focused partner organizations, ornithologists, and bird enthusiasts. Based on feedback from partners, preliminary ideas for repackaging of the 2025 SWAP include documents or



webpages based on the 14 priority threat areas, taxonomic groups, habitats, and counties, as much of Maryland’s governance is conducted at the county level. This effort will result in greater visibility and utility of information from the SWAP, which is key to implementation.

Finally, adequate funding sources for nongame species management over the next decade will be critical for successful SWAP implementation. Federal funding for nongame species conservation has decreased since the State Wildlife Grant (SWG) program was first established: for Fiscal Year (FY) 2002, \$85 million was appropriated (USFWS 2002), whereas in FY2025, just over \$55 million was appropriated (USFWS 2025). Additionally, plant conservation work is not eligible for SWG funding. This is exacerbated by the fact that MD DNR NHP—unlike many other state-run programs—does not receive any state general tax dollars. While MD DNR continues to seek out stakeholder support, it will be difficult for NHP to continue to lead conservation efforts statewide and to adequately implement the SWAP without sufficient funding. Partners have noted struggles with adequate funding as well, and, as a result, identified this lack of funding as one of the 14 priority need areas for the post-SWAP implementation period. It is MD DNR’s intention to highlight this as a need over the next 10-year period through continued conversations with partners, stakeholders, and legislators in order to find a more permanent solution to this funding issue.

Review and Revision

Under U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) guidance, SWAPs undergo a maximum 10-year revision cycle. Most SWAPs across the country were first published in 2005, revised in 2015, revised again in 2025, and will be updated again in or before 2035. This cycle of revision allows the Maryland SWAP to be a living document that, through continuous information updates and periodic revisions, will guide Maryland’s conservation planning for years to come. The creation of a web-enabled version of the SWAP will further support this effort to make the SWAP a living document.

As scientific knowledge and understanding of Maryland’s species and their habitats continues to grow, information gathered during the implementation of the SWAP provides important updates to the body of scientific information maintained by MD DNR. In particular, the studies funded by SWG, other grants to MD DNR, and the activities of partners (e.g., universities, NGOs) form the basis of new scientific information to be incorporated into future revisions of the SWAP. MD DNR understands that conserving and protecting the state’s wildlife requires a long-term commitment. During the plan’s implementation, MD DNR will review, evaluate, and update progress on conservation actions, research, inventories, surveys, and monitoring on a periodic basis.

NHP will work to update the Plan as needed, especially in response to information that could affect management decisions. New information may be appended to the SWAP during the implementation phase in cases of major changes in the status or condition of Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) or key wildlife habitats (KWHs), or for new and rapidly emerging threats. For example, a new invasive species may become established in Maryland and the list of threats, actions, and SGCN may need to be revised to deal effectively with the new problem. Assessment of species’ conservation status by NHP is ongoing as one of its core functions, with changes formalized every three to five years. This may lead to changes in the SGCN list.



However, it is anticipated that most new information will be included during the next major SWAP revision in 2035.

MD DNR will work with its partners to continually assess the conservation needs of Maryland's SGCN and their habitats. This assessment will include factors such as changes in threats and landscape-scale or significant local issues that need to be addressed. MD DNR may also recommend modifications to the overarching conservation actions or any specific actions provided in Appendices 6a and 6b based on any of these new and emerging significant threats or based on novel solutions and technological advances, including for monitoring. As part of this general review process and at other times when revision may be necessary, MD DNR will seek broader input and comment from other agencies, organizations, experts, and the public.

Despite best intentions, many of these interim review steps were not taken during the past SWAP implementation period (i.e., from the publishing of the 2015 SWAP revision until now). This is due in large part to the lack of a long-term staff member or team of staff at MD DNR dedicated to the implementation, review, and revision of the SWAP. It is MD DNR's intention that a staff member or team of staff will remain focused on the SWAP throughout this future SWAP implementation period, ensuring that the implementation of the SWAP's objectives, communication and coordination with partners, and interim review and revision will remain more consistent during the next 10-year period. Staff support for closer coordination with conservation partnerships and regional efforts will also assist with needed SWAP updates well in advance of 2035.

Maryland SWAP Review Schedule

MD DNR will coordinate and complete a comprehensive revision of this SWAP by October 2035 (**Element #6**). Between major revisions, MD DNR and USFWS frameworks will guide the implementation process, maximizing opportunities for both internal and external implementation. For example, the existing USFWS process requires annual reporting and review with five-year Application for Federal Assistance work plans and evaluations for some funding streams. Most MD DNR agency programs, including NHP, have annual reporting requirements from their federal grants or other funding sources. Annual or project-end results that indicate any changes or new information, including information from periodic review by technical experts, will be assessed for use in an adaptive management process and eventual plan revision.

In summary, the Maryland SWAP evaluation, review, and revision schedule will include the following benchmarks:

- Annual reporting for SWG funding and other Federal Aid grant requirements;
- Regular analysis and incorporation of tabular and spatial data into appropriate MD DNR and partner databases and GIS systems;
- Regular incorporation and updates of priority Maryland SWAP conservation actions into MD DNR and partner plans;
- Regular review of results of monitoring and performance measures;
- Regular status review of SGCN, including whether species on the State Assessment Priority Species (SAPS) list need to be moved to the SGCN list, which will likely align



with the existing review of Maryland’s Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species list undergone every three to five years; and,

- The complete revision of the SWAP every 10 years, which will incorporate all interim updates and reviews.

This final chapter provided an overview of the future of the SWAP. It addressed how Maryland intends to implement the Plan over the next 10 years with the help of partners, stakeholders, and the general public (addressing **Elements #7** and **#8**). It also summarized how Maryland will review and revise the Plan within the next 10 years (addressing **Element #6**).



Citations and Sources

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). 2002. “Tribal Wildlife Grants (TWG) Program Implementation Guidelines for Fiscal Year (FY) 2002.” *Federal Register* 76(249): 79136. <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2002-12-27/pdf/02-32700.pdf>.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). 2025. “Final Apportionment of State Wildlife Grants for Fiscal Year 2025.” <https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2025-05/fy-2025-swg-apportionment-table.pdf>.

