Chapter 2

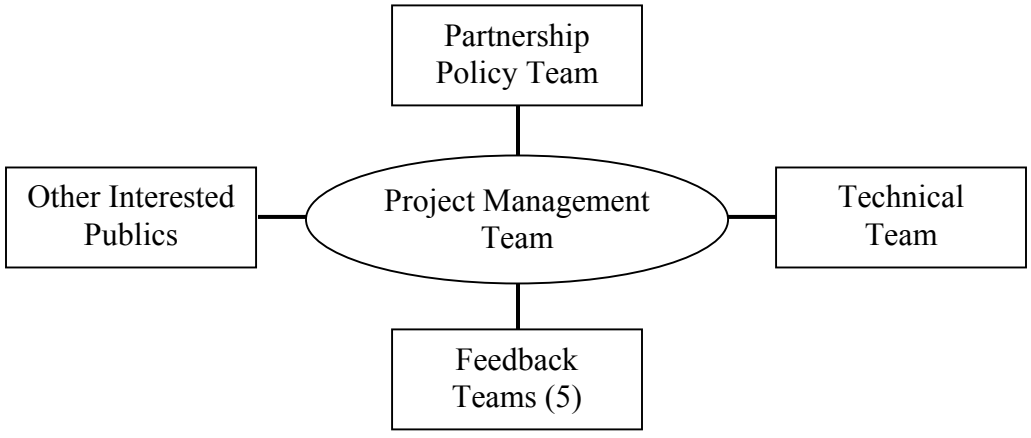
Developing and Implementing Tomorrow's Habitat for the Wild and Rare

Tomorrow's Habitat for the Wild and Rare: An Action Plan for Minnesota Wildlife (referred to in this document as Minnesota's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy or CWCS) has been a significant undertaking by Minnesota's conservation community. Led by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), project scoping was begun by the DNR Division of Ecological Services in early 2003. Soon afterward, a project manager was hired, and in April 2003, the project manager and the director of the Division of Ecological Services attended an introductory meeting held in Madison, Wisconsin, hosted by the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The purpose of this meeting was to help states become familiar with the CWCS effort and the eight required elements.

In late summer 2003, a CWCS Project Management Team made up of DNR employees was established and began meeting weekly. The team's goal was to support the development of the CWCS and ensure the involvement of federal, state, and local agencies, Indian tribes, nongovernmental organizations, and many others. They created the project structure, shown in Figure 2.1, to infuse Minnesota's CWCS with the technical expertise and conservation commitment necessary for a successful planning process.

CWCS Project Structure

Figure 2.1. CWCS Project Structure—Minnesota's Conservation Stakeholders



If one ingredient could be identified as the most important to creating a successful CWCS project, it would be the establishment of a broad conservation partnership committed to healthier populations of species in greatest conservation need. Such a partnership has

been created for Minnesota's CWCS project, engaging the people who have a significant stake in the CWCS from its onset. Early on in the project's development, DNR leaders recognized the need to reach beyond the DNR to successfully address concerns about Minnesota's species in greatest conservation need. They created an integrated CWCS project structure that enlisted the support of several DNR divisions, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, The Nature Conservancy, Audubon Minnesota, the U.S. Geological Survey, the University of Minnesota, the Natural Resources Research Institute, and numerous others.

Partnership Policy Team

The Partnership Policy Team ensured that partner organizations were connected and committed to the CWCS project. Chaired by the DNR's director of Ecological Services, the team included leaders from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, DNR Division of Fish and Wildlife, The Nature Conservancy, and Audubon Minnesota. These individuals participated because their organizations are broadly focused on the conservation of species in greatest conservation need. Without exception, they offered the time and resources necessary to develop the CWCS. The team met approximately quarterly during the two years of the project and reviewed interim products, providing comments and support.

CWCS Partnership Policy Team

Ed Boggess, Planning and Policy Director, DNR Fish and Wildlife
John Christian, Assistant Regional Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Gabe Horner, Legislative Director, The Nature Conservancy
Tom Landwehr, Assistant State Director, The Nature Conservancy
Mark Martell, Director of Bird Conservation, Audubon Minnesota
Ron Payer, Program Director, DNR Fish and Wildlife
Lee Pfannmuller, Director, DNR Ecological Services

Project Management Team

The CWCS Project Management Team was made up of nine DNR employees responsible for designing and managing the CWCS project, including the director of the Division of Ecological Services. She shaped the CWCS vision from the beginning and oversaw the strategy from development to completion. The CWCS project manager chaired this group, and a CWCS ecologist/GIS expert was hired to lead the CWCS technical analysis. The DNR Ecological Services planner participated extensively, facilitating project tasks and guiding CWCS direction. Other key individuals on this team served in the development of the CWCS, supporting the activities of the other teams, ensuring the involvement of interested participants, and helping assemble the final CWCS document.

This team met regularly throughout the 2½-year project. The core CWCS support staff on this team—the project manager, ecologist, and planner—met daily to keep the project moving forward to completion and on to implementation.

CWCS Project Management Team

Daren Carlson, CWCS Ecologist/GIS Analyst, DNR Ecological Services
Bonita Eliason, Natural Heritage and Nongame Research Supervisor, DNR Ecological Services
Katie Haws, Nongame Wildlife Regional Specialist, DNR Ecological Services
Carrol Henderson, Nongame Wildlife Supervisor, DNR Ecological Services
Rachel Hopper, Research Analyst, DNR Ecological Services
Emmett Mullin, CWCS Project Manager, DNR Office of Management and Budget Services
Jane Norris, Assistant Federal Aid Coordinator, DNR Fish and Wildlife
Lee Pfannmuller, Director, DNR Ecological Services
Brian Stenquist, Planner, DNR Ecological Services

Technical Team

The CWCS Technical Team included scientists from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, divisions of the DNR, The Nature Conservancy, Audubon Minnesota, the U.S. Geological Survey, the University of Minnesota, and the Natural Resources Research Institute. The Technical Team designed the technical assessment, defined and identified the set of Minnesota's species in greatest conservation need, determined key habitats, and established the priority conservation actions. They also created frameworks for research, surveys, and monitoring. Throughout 2004, the Technical Team met two days each month. Between meetings, members of the Technical Team conferred with colleagues and brought back their insights to rich and integrative discussions. They met less frequently in 2005, mainly to review and assist with the integration of comments from the five feedback teams and Minnesota's other interested publics.

CWCS Technical Team

Robert Blair, University of Minnesota
Daren Carlson, DNR Ecological Services
Meredith Cornett, The Nature Conservancy
Gary Drotts, DNR Fish and Wildlife
Bonita Eliason, DNR Ecological Services
Linda Erickson-Eastwood, DNR Fish and Wildlife
JoAnn Hanowski, Natural Resources Research Institute
Jay Hatch, University of Minnesota
Katie Haws, DNR Ecological Services
Melinda Knutson, U.S. Geological Survey (currently with USFWS)
Mark Martell, Audubon Minnesota
Emmett Mullin, chair, DNR Office of Management and Budget Services
Gerda Norquist, DNR Ecological Services
Brian Stenquist, DNR Ecological Services
Tom Will, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Feedback Teams

The five CWCS feedback teams were made up of 87 people from almost 40 organizations. Four of these teams were organized around the four DNR regions (Figure 2.2), and one was a statewide team. Their primary responsibility was to review the products of the Technical Team. In particular, they gave feedback on the definition of species in greatest conservation need, the set of species in greatest conservation need, the 25 subsection profiles, and the draft CWCS.

The members of the feedback teams were asked to contribute up to 20 hours of their time during the life of the CWCS project. Many of them offered much more. Over the course of this project, these teams provided hundreds of pages of comments that substantially improved the CWCS, making it more locally grounded, accurate, and relevant.

Figure 2.2. Four DNR Regions

Five CWCS Feedback Teams

Northwest Feedback Team (DNR Region 1)

Janet Boe, DNR Ecological Services, Team Coordinator
Peter Buesseler, DNR Ecological Services
John Casson, U.S. Forest Service
Tom Groshens, DNR Fish and Wildlife
Katie Haws, DNR Ecological Services
Gary Huschle, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Jay Huseby, Red Lake Tribal Government
John Loegering, University of Minnesota—Crookston
John Mathweg, DNR Forestry
George-Ann Maxson, Audubon Minnesota
Doug McCarthur, White Earth Tribal Government
Steve Mortensen, Leech Lake Tribal Government
Larry Olson, Cass County government
Russel Reisz, The Nature Conservancy
Dave Thompson, resort owner
Brian Winter, The Nature Conservancy
Mike Zicus, DNR Fish and Wildlife

Northeast Feedback Team (DNR Region 2)

Pam Perry, DNR Ecological Services, Team Coordinator
Mike Albers, DNR Forestry
Bill Berg, Minnesota Sharptail Grouse Society
Mike Duval, DNR Fish and Wildlife
Fitz Fitzgerald, Minnesota Land Trust
Jan Green, Audubon Minnesota
Maya Hamady, DNR Ecological Services
Jim Lind, NRRI, University of Minnesota
Michelle McDowell, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Larry Peterson, DNR Fish and Wildlife
Mike Schrage, Fond-du-Lac Tribal Government
Al Williamson, U.S. Forest Service
Steve Wilson, DNR Ecological Services
Dave Zentner, Izaak Walton League

Central Feedback Team (DNR Region 3)

Carrol Henderson, DNR Ecological Services, Team Coordinator
Sue Burks, DNR Forestry
Mark Cleveland, DNR Parks and Recreation
Don Dindorf, Minnesota Conservation Federation
Brian Dirks, DNR Ecological Services
Kate Drewry, DNR Metro Greenways
Bob Fashingbauer, DNR Fish and Wildlife

Joan Galli, DNR Ecological Services (now retired)
Larry Gillette, Three Rivers Park District
Fred Harris, Great River Greening
Jeanne Holler, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Beau Liddell, DNR Fish and Wildlife
Mike North, DNR Ecological Services
Bill Penning, DNR Fish and Wildlife
Vic Peppe, Falconers Association
Jeff Perry, Anoka County Parks
Marco Restani, St. Cloud State University
Konrad Schmidt, DNR Ecological Services
Hannah Texler, DNR Ecological Services

Southern Feedback Team (DNR Region 4)

Jaime Edwards, DNR Ecological Services, Team Coordinator
Pete Bauman, The Nature Conservancy
Phil Cochran, St. Mary's University
Jason Garms, DNR Ecological Services
Larry Gates, DNR Fish and Wildlife
Lisa Gelvin-Innvaer, DNR Ecological Services
Diane Granfors, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Kurt Haroldson, DNR Fish and Wildlife
Tex Hawkins, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
John Hunt, Trout Unlimited
Aaron Kuehl, Pheasants Forever
Jim Miller, Iowa State University
Mark Oja, Natural Resources Conservation Service
Cynthia Osmundson, DNR Administration
Doug Rau, DNR Forestry
John Schladweiler, DNR Fish and Wildlife
Jon Schneider, Ducks Unlimited

Statewide Feedback Team

Bonita Eliason, DNR Ecological Services, Team Coordinator
Cheryl Adams, UPM-Blandin Paper Company
David Andersen, MN Cooperative F&W Research Unit, USGS
Rich Baker, DNR Ecological Services
Mike Davis, DNR Ecological Services
Phil Delphey, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Mark Ebbers, DNR Fish and Wildlife
Leonard Ferrington, University of Minnesota, Aquatic Invertebrates
Carol Hall, DNR Ecological Services
Rick Horton, Ruffed Grouse Society

Alan Jones, DNR Forestry
Ann Kessen, Minnesota Ornithological Union
Steve Merchant, DNR Fish and Wildlife
John Moriarty, Ramsey County Government
Harvey K. Nelson, MN Waterfowl Association (Consultant), MN Outdoor Heritage Alliance, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (retired)
Jon Nelson, DNR Forestry
Ray Norrgard, DNR Fish and Wildlife
Ed Quinn, DNR Parks and Recreation
Susan Schmidt, Trust for Public Land
Jon Schneider, Ducks Unlimited

Other Interested Publics

Minnesota's other interested publics represent the broadest and largest group of governmental agencies, organizations, and individuals in the CWCS project structure. This group includes any organization or person interested in participating in CWCS review, including members of the general public. The role of this group was to help refine and improve the draft CWCS.

Most important, all participants in this effort will be asked to join in implementation, adopting and adapting the CWCS to their unique interests and capacities. This work will entail active engagement in site-based conservation discussions, taking the strategic information presented here and infusing it with local insights and concerns. The end result will be a higher level of coordination among conservation stakeholders and better on-the-ground conservation results.

Conservation Stakeholders' Involvement in CWCS Development

The CWCS Project Management Team's goal for public involvement was to strategically engage Minnesota's conservation community and others, collectively referred to as conservation stakeholders, in the development of the CWCS. The Minnesota CWCS partnership believes meaningful public participation is critical to the development of the strategy. Participation results in a more engaged citizenry that is better informed about Minnesota's species in greatest conservation need and is more likely to participate in CWCS implementation. Participation creates strong partnerships, which will result in improved conditions for Minnesota's species in greatest conservation need (SGCN). This fundamental belief has guided participation during the development of the CWCS from the onset.

From the beginning of the CWCS project in July 2003, the primary approach has been to integrate participation directly into the project structure. Individuals knowledgeable about Minnesota's ecology, wildlife conservation, and the habitats and species of the state were invited to participate on one of the project's teams. A key

responsibility of the CWCS Project Management Team has been to reach out to organizations and individuals concerned about SGCN and encourage them to participate in the development of the CWCS.

The Project Management Team decided not to hold traditional, large public planning meetings. While this oft-used approach is an effective way to solicit broad public input, it is not a good tool to cultivate sustained and detailed involvement. The team strived for targeted involvement, so that when feedback was solicited, stakeholders understood how it would be incorporated. The creation of the five CWCS feedback teams exemplifies this approach.

Project staff also reached out to an even broader spectrum of conservation stakeholders in development of the CWCS through a number of approaches. In early 2004, a Web site dedicated to Minnesota's CWCS was launched (http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/cwcs/index.html). At this site, there was a description of the CWCS project and its participants, the definition of SGCN, and the set of species. Project staff also made presentations at numerous conservation organization meetings and conferences, did outreach to industry groups, and gave lectures at universities. In addition, members of the many partnership groups were encouraged to keep their respective organizations informed and engaged in the development of the strategy.

The CWCS project team members also engaged Minnesota's conservation community directly several times during the development of the plan, for example, at the 2004 and 2005 DNR Roundtable events. Held each January, the DNR Roundtables bring together Minnesota's conservation community to focus on the most pressing issues of the day. The purpose of these engagements was to give stakeholders an understanding of the CWCS development, provide an opportunity to ask questions, and encourage them to become involved in implementation.

Finally, in July 2005 the draft CWCS document was posted on the DNR's Web site for one month, and feedback was solicited. Interested individuals had the opportunity to provide feedback directly to the project manager. A press release was sent to all major media outlets in the state, encouraging citizens and groups to comment. Four hundred fifty postcards were sent to individuals and organizations in Minnesota's conservation community, asking for their help reviewing the document. In addition, a number of organizations and groups were contacted directly and encouraged to participate. All in all, this group provided significant and invaluable comments, all of which were considered and integrated into the draft document to the best of our ability.

Implementation of the CWCS

Successful implementation of the CWCS requires a strong commitment from the partners to move the CWCS into on-the-ground conservation. A logical first step is to reaffirm the current CWCS project structure as the base from which to build successful implementation. This structure embodies the leadership and organizational support necessary to make a successful transition to action.

To ensure a successful transition to CWCS action, the DNR director of Ecological Services has committed three CWCS project staff to continue into the implementation phase. These staff have been at the center of CWCS planning and are well acquainted with the plan's priorities and the partners. During the first year of implementation, they will translate CWCS priorities into actions by facilitating discussions among the CWCS partners and other interested conservation groups. These discussions will take place using existing conservation forums as well as developing new ones. The dedication of staff to this transition will help ensure that CWCS implementation receives the technical and logistical support necessary for success.

Conservation Stakeholders' Involvement During CWCS Implementation

As important as conservation stakeholders' participation has been during the development of the CWCS, we anticipate even more extensive engagement in the implementation of the strategy. We will create a project structure for the implementation that will include a statewide team and dedicated staff committed to promoting public discussion of the CWCS during its implementation.

General public involvement will increase as we use the CWCS to engage citizens in the challenge of ensuring a sustainable future for Minnesota's wildlife. We anticipate reaching citizens through the Internet and the DNR Web site, print publications, participation in local events, and presentations to groups of interested residents. In addition, we think there is tremendous potential to engage members of the public in the work of the CWCS through their interest in outdoor recreation and stewardship education.

Statewide CWCS Partner Implementation Team and Partner Work Planning

At the center of CWCS implementation will be the Partner Implementation Team. Led by the DNR director of Ecological Services and composed of leadership from the organizations invested in CWCS development and committed to its success, this team will coordinate partner involvement during implementation. The team will meet at least two times a year to ensure organizational commitment, provide direction to staff, and address the challenges of implementation. Individual team members may reach out to their field organizations (if appropriate) to coordinate conservation actions. Early in the implementation period, this group may need to meet more frequently.

Currently, the conservation actions in the 25 subsection profiles identified in chapter 5 broadly describe the type of work needed. During implementation, the Partner Implementation Team will guide or develop a process for more detailed operational planning among CWCS partners. This will require meetings involving people knowledgeable about each subsection, to discuss the more specific conservation actions needed. Early on in implementation, it will be important to continue identifying interested partners, as well as understanding their priorities, capacities, and expertise.

For the implementation of CWCS to succeed, partner organizations will need to integrate relevant CWCS priorities into their internal work plans. Partners will consider CWCS priorities to their greatest ability as they plan for the upcoming work and when collaborative opportunities arise, partners will have a common vision.

The Partner Implementation Team will lead biennial evaluations and reviews of CWCS implementation progress. Using the monitoring and evaluation capacities of the individual organizations, the team will assess the effectiveness of the CWCS conservation actions and the status of SGCN, making course corrections when needed and initiating new projects. On a periodic basis, this group will oversee the development of status reports, providing documentation of outcomes and recommendations for renewing and adjusting needed priority conservation actions. These reports will be made available to interested publics. Biennial work planning and evaluation will ensure that revision of the strategy toward the end of the first 10 years will be less daunting than was the initial creation of CWCS.

Minnesota DNR Leadership During CWCS Implementation

CWCS implementation depends directly on a vibrant and engaged partnership. The Minnesota DNR will be the primary action agency responsible for leading and guiding implementation efforts. One fundamental goal of CWCS implementation is to identify important and innovative conservation projects under way and to help support them when their objectives coincide with the priorities to better manage species in greatest conservation need.

CWCS project support of related programs and projects could occur in a number of ways, for example, providing financial or technical assistance or logistical or structural support, or even using the CWCS as a discussion forum to help determine conservation priorities. In some parts of Minnesota, the CWCS project will have a significant on-the-ground presence; in other places, it may only be brought in by CWCS partnership staff working in collaboration on tangentially related projects.

Another primary goal of CWCS implementation is to responsibly administer the State Wildlife Grants funds to initiate new conservation actions and/or provide financial assistance to existing ones that are critical to addressing CWCS priorities. The DNR will use the priority conservation actions established in each of the 25 CWCS subsection profiles in chapter 5 to help guide SWG program funding decisions. In addition to the conservation actions, decision-making criteria regarding importance, urgency,

practicality, and collaboration will be applied. While the conservation actions identified in the profiles are fairly broad, they frame the type of work needed for SGCN management over the next 10 years. Key habitat work provides the first-order priority in each subsection. Within each of the key habitats, there is a variety of work to be done concerning habitat and species management, survey, research, monitoring, outreach, and SGCN appreciation. While the State Wildlife Grants Program has an important role in supporting SGCN work, it does not have the capacity to support all the work needed over the next 10 years.

As part of its long-term commitment to strategic planning, the Minnesota DNR has established "A Strategic Conservation Agenda, 2003–2007," which describes the agency's progress toward achieving conservation results. It identifies 85 indicators and targets in six performance areas: natural lands, fisheries and wildlife, waters and watersheds, forests, outdoor recreation, and natural resources stewardship education. This effort has been directly integrated with Minnesota's CWCS. Eighteen of its 85 indicators are immediately related to the CWCS. These indicators commit the DNR to monitoring and evaluating progress with regard to SGCN, invasive species, and numerous key habitats, and to continuing surveying work, such as completing Minnesota's County Biological Survey. The Conservation Agenda will be kept up-to-date and will be a useful guide and source of information for monitoring CWCS implementation.

Examples of Efforts That Will Aid CWCS Implementation

Here are a few illustrations of efforts that may assist in the implementation of CWCS. Some of them have already begun to aid in the implementation. These examples do not capture the breadth of the conservation efforts that are critical to CWCS implementation. There are simply too many to mention here.

DNR Efforts

The DNR Division of Ecological Services houses numerous efforts that will assist in CWCS implementation. Following are a few examples.

Landowner Incentive Program (LIP)

LIP has served as an important CWCS partner during the planning stages of CWCS and will continue to do so during implementation. LIP is a federally funded, state-implemented program that provides technical and financial assistance to eligible private landowners who wish to voluntarily manage their land to benefit at-risk plant and animal species. LIP is not a land acquisition program, and fee-title acquisition is not an eligible use of LIP funds. The Minnesota DNR Division of Ecological Services implements LIP in Minnesota.

In southeastern Minnesota, LIP staff are working with private landowners to enhance or restore the bluff prairie habitats on their properties to benefit the timber rattlesnake, three other at-risk snake species, and numerous at-risk plant species. LIP

rattlesnake program staff assist landowners with the development and implementation of management plans designed to protect den sites and travel corridors, while minimizing human–snake encounters. The State Wildlife Grants Program provided funding for rattlesnake surveys. In western Minnesota, LIP staff are working with private landowners to protect and manage valuable native prairie that provides habitat for many SGCN.

Nongame Wildlife Management

Nongame wildlife managers have had a central role in the development of the CWCS and will be key to successful implementation. Staff members serve a critical function by providing technical assistance to other DNR disciplines and external stakeholders to ensure that the management needs of nongame wildlife species are taken into account in land management decisions. Their work to survey and monitor select nongame species, restore and manage threatened and endangered species and their habitats, and promote education and recreational opportunities is important. Nongame staff will serve as some of the frontline implementers and have the challenging task of helping to carry the priorities of this effort out to the broader conservation community.

Natural Heritage and Nongame Wildlife Research

These staff collect, manage, analyze, and interpret information about many of Minnesota's species in greatest conservation need as well as native plants and plant communities to promote the wise stewardship of these resources. Staff members have played an essential role in CWCS development and will continue to play a central role managing information about SGCN and their habitats, and developing research and monitoring actions for the CWCS. Natural Heritage plant community ecologists will also serve a lead role in CWCS field implementation through their efforts to conserve habitats key to the sustainability of SGCN.

Minnesota County Biological Survey (MCBS)

MCBS began in 1987 as a systematic survey of rare biological features. The goal of the MCBS is to identify significant natural areas and to collect and interpret data on the distribution and ecology of rare plants, rare animals, and native plant communities. This program has provided field data and interpretations related to species, habitats and native plant communities used in the CWCS planning effort. It will continue to serve as an essential partner in CWCS implementation.

Other Efforts

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Habitat and Population Evaluation Team (HAPET)
Office: Decision Support Tools

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's HAPET office has designed several decision support tools that have been helpful during the CWCS planning period and will be valuable during implementation to better target areas for conservation work. One of the

agency's models was used to create some of the maps in this document. In several of the western Minnesota subsection profiles (see chapter 5), key habitats were identified using the Grassland Bird Conservation Area (GBCA) tool. This tool identifies grassland areas that minimize edge, do not border wooded patches, and are in landscapes with additional grassland cover. Grassland conservation practices (e.g., Conservation Reserve Program, fee-title, restoration) in these areas benefit grassland-dependent birds by restoring or protecting habitat where productivity is believed to be higher than in areas with less grass cover, more edge, and smaller habitat patches. These large areas provide habitat for area-sensitive species such as marbled godwits and greater prairie chickens.

Working Lands Initiative

The working lands initiative is a broad-based cooperative effort among state and federal agencies and nongovernmental organizations to encourage conservation and agricultural interests to work together to address water quality and habitat needs in the prairie pothole region of Minnesota. The initiative will use GIS technology, models, and expert opinion to focus conservation work in areas where the fewest possible acres can be managed with the greatest possible benefit provided. It seeks to mobilize partners—agencies, conservation organizations, and the agricultural community—and programs to work more effectively together to benefit wetland and grassland habitats and reduce erosion in order to support desired wildlife populations and improve water quality.

The Nature Conservancy's Ecoregional Assessments

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is an international conservation organization dedicated to preserving the diversity of life on earth. In Minnesota, TNC has developed four ecoregional assessments for each of the state's major ecological areas. The purpose of these assessments is to design a portfolio of conservation areas that, with proper management, ensures the long-term survival of the species, communities, and ecological systems within a particular ecoregion. The Nature Conservancy has been a vital partner in the CWCS, and its assessment of terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity has been tremendously helpful (see chapter 7, Methods and Analyses, for a more detailed description of TNC's planning efforts.)

Audubon Minnesota's Important Bird Areas

The goal of the Important Bird Areas Program (IBA) is to identify, conserve, and monitor a network of sites that provide crucial habitat for birds in Minnesota. As part of an international effort, the sites will include breeding, migration, and wintering habitats for all birds and may occur on both public and private land that may or may not be currently protected. The IBA Program will work through partnerships that include government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and private citizens. The State Wildlife Grants Program has provided financial support for the IBA program for the past three years.

Minnesota DNR Subsection Forest Resources Management Planning Efforts

The Minnesota DNR manages approximately 4.5 million acres of forestland, about one-quarter of all forestland in the state. The DNR plans long-term (50-plus years) and short-term (10-year) vegetation management on these lands through Subsection Forest Resource Management Plans (SFRMPs). SFRMPs, which are based on ecological classification system (ECS) subsections rather than administrative boundaries, are the primary tool for determining the array of forest resources that will be provided and sustained through vegetation management on DNR-administered forestlands.

The DNR began preparing SFRMPs in 2000 and is preparing SFRMPs for the 17 ECS subsections that are considered forested. Local interdisciplinary DNR teams produce the three primary components of the plans: Assessment and Issues, Strategic Direction, and the 10-Year List of Forest Stands to be treated. Each component is made available for public review and comment. The DNR's goal is to complete all SFRMPs by 2007. It will be important for the CWCS effort to explore opportunities to integrate with SFRMP development, providing valuable SGCN information to be considered and incorporated in the planning dialogue.

Bird Conservation Minnesota

The goal of Bird Conservation Minnesota is "to deliver the full spectrum of bird conservation through regionally-based, biologically driven, landscape-oriented partnerships." It is a new collaborative effort among numerous governmental and nongovernmental entities that seek to keep birds common and reverse species declines, building on many of the same CWCS priority actions. This voluntary partnership builds on efforts already under way by government agencies and tourism and conservation organizations.

Campaign Conservation

In celebration of Minnesota's sesquicentennial in 2008, a large number of Minnesota's conservation organizations are joining together to create "Campaign Conservation." This coordinated endeavor will identify and protect some of Minnesota's most important lands and waters. Priorities established in CWCS will serve as important tools to help guide this new initiative.

The CWCS provides a comprehensive framework that will play a critical, integrative role to connect and focus the broad array of existing conservation efforts throughout Minnesota. The programs listed above illustrate only a few of the many opportunities for conservation partnerships. Through creative, open dialogue, the CWCS framework can serve to more efficiently guide resources and staff to better conserve all wildlife.

CWCS Revision: 2013

One of the requirements of the CWCS is the review and revision of the strategy in 10 years. Because implementation of the CWCS will be built on and guided by regular planning and evaluation within the CWCS partnership, the revision process will not require the same start-up time and costs associated with the initial development. The 10-year revision will, however, require substantial public participation to ensure both stakeholder and general public support for the next implementation period.

Formal revision of the CWCS should begin in approximately 2013, eight years into the implementation period, which runs 2005–2015. At that time, a thorough evaluation of the implementation to date should occur, and a determination should be made of both the effectiveness of the conservation actions and whether the status of the set of species in greatest conservation need has changed. While today 2013 seems far off in the future and the exact process for updating the CWCS is not known, the CWCS project's commitment to meaningful public participation is steadfast. A project structure similar to the one created during the initial CWCS planning effort will be an essential element of this next update.