

Vermont's Wildlife Action Plan*

November 22, 2005

Appendix E Sample Conservation Partner Correspondence

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**formally the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS)*

VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT

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February 23, 2004

Subject: Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy

Dear Conservation Partner,

I'm writing to encourage you and/or your organization to get involved in the development of Vermont's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS). The CWCS is a new statewide (and national) effort, funded by the federal State Wildlife Grants program, to identify species of greatest conservation need and their habitats and to define actions that will conserve them. Two key elements set the CWCS apart from other planning efforts: 1) it will be an all species strategy; and 2) it will be a strategy for Vermont, not just for the Fish and Wildlife Department. On March 24, 2004 we'll hold the first meeting of CWCS Conservation Partners. We'd like you or someone from your organization to attend.

The State Wildlife Grants program (SWG) was created by Congress in 2001 to support fish and wildlife conservation for under-funded species. The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department has since become eligible for more than \$2.5 million in federal conservation dollars—with millions more available in the in the future. SWG requires that we develop a statewide Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy by Oct 1, 2005.

The Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy is not just another plan. Congress has charged State Fish and Wildlife Departments with developing statewide all-species conservation strategies. The actions defined by Vermont's CWCS will be eligible for hundreds of thousands of dollars of federal funds annually for implementation. Furthermore, Conservation Strategies are being produced by every state, the territories and the District of Columbia. Together, the strategies will provide a collective "plan" for safeguarding our wildlife legacy—efficiently and cost-effectively.

How will the CWCS be developed? The CWCS will grow out of a joint effort of many conservation partners. Congress charged State Fish and Wildlife Departments with leading the CWCS development but Congress also made it clear that it expects the help, advice and expertise of other state and federal agencies, conservation organizations and the general public.

Why you're needed. A strategy is only as good as its components. We need your expertise, your ideas, your priorities and your solutions. To be effective, the strategy must be shaped by the people who know Vermont, and who understand the issues, the challenges and the threats to wildlife.

What's in it for you? The Conservation Strategy will help create a vision for the future direction of wildlife conservation and will likely influence future funding. By participating,

you will expand and strengthen networks and coalitions for conserving our wildlife resources. By working collectively for our common conservation interests we will insure a health future for wildlife in Vermont.

What will Vermont's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy look like?

Congress has left much of the development of the CWCS up to us, though there are a number of required elements including the identification of species of greatest conservation need and their habitats, the identification of threats and the development of actions to conserve these species. The Conservation Strategy should also consider the full array of Vermont's wildlife and habitats—taking advantage of good work already done in Vermont and filling in missing gaps.

In order to develop a plan by 2005, we've created an approach that employs several interactive teams, including:

- *Conservation Partners*: an advisory committee that will assist the development of the Conservation Strategy.
- *Species Advisory Team* a technical team that will develop criteria for selecting species of greatest conservation need and synthesize and develop overarching conservation solutions.
- *Species Teams* a technical team that will identify species in need, their habitats, threats and conservation actions.

I am contacting you because of your commitment to Vermont's wildlife. Please consider becoming a Conservation Partner in the creation of our state's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy, a commitment that will run through October 2005.

I encourage you to get involved in this important project for the future of Vermont's wildlife. **If you or another member of your organization is interested in participating as a Conservation Partner please contact Jon Kart at 802-241-3652 or jon.kart@anr.state.vt.us by March 10, 2004.** If you or your organization is unable to participate as a Conservation Partner, we will try to provide other meaningful ways for your involvement in the planning process and welcome a chance to talk with you about potential roles.

Please feel free to contact me, or Jon Kart, with any questions, comments, or ideas for the development of a statewide Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy. I look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Wayne A. Laroche
Commissioner

Enclosures:

- Meeting agenda and directions to the meeting
- Meeting registration form

**Conservation Partners Meeting for the
Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy
March 24th, 2004 • Lake Morey Resort • Fairlee, VT**

Meeting Agenda

- 9:30 Registration and coffee
- 10:00 Welcome, Commissioner Wayne Laroche
- 10:15 Review of the Day, Fisheries Director Eric Palmer
- 10:20 History of Wildlife Funding in Vermont, Wildlife Director Tom Decker
- 10:40 Wildlife Conservation Opportunities, Operations Director Ron Regan
- 11:00 The Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy process,
CWCS Coordinator Jon Kart
- 11:30 Questions & Answers
- Noon Lunch (provided)
- 1:00 Reconvene
- 1:05 Breakout sessions to refine the Comprehensive Wildlife
Conservation Strategy process
- 2:30 Where do we go from here?
- 3:00 Adjourn

Directions to Lake Morey Resort, Fairlee, VT

Lake Morey Resort 800-423-1211

From the North: Take I-91 south to Exit 15. Turn right off Exit 15. Then take the first immediate right followed by the first left. Lake Morey Resort will be on your right (it is less than a minute from the exit).

From the South: Take I-91 north to Exit 15. Turn left off Exit 15. Then take the first immediate right followed by the first left. Lake Morey Resort will be on your right (it is less than a minute from the exit).

From the West:

Interstate Directions: Take I-89 South to White River Junction to I-91 North to Exit 15. Turn left off Exit 15. Then take the first immediate right followed by the first left. Lake Morey Resort will be on your right (it is less than a minute from the exit).

Back road Directions: (faster if you are coming from Montpelier or points West of Montpelier.) Take I-89 to Exit 7. Take Rt. 62 East to Rt. 302 East to Rt. 25 East to Bradford, VT. In Bradford take I-91 South one exit to Exit 15. Turn right off Exit 15. Then take the first immediate right followed by the first left. Lake Morey Resort will be on your right (it is less than a minute from the exit).

**Conservation Partners Meeting Registration
Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy
March 24th, 2004 • Lake Morey Resort • Fairlee, VT**

Please join us at the initial meeting of Conservation Partners in the development of Vermont's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy. We need to move forward developing the Conservation Strategy, so please let us you of your interest by returning this form by March 10, 2004.

Register with Jon Kart, CWCS Coordinator by March 10th, 2003

Registration procedures

- 1) Fill out the form below and...
- 2) Submit your registration by telephone, email, fax or US mail.
 - Call: Jon Kart 802-241-3652
 - Email: jon.kart@anr.state.vt.us
 - Fax: 802-241-3295
 - US Mail: Jon Kart CWCS Coordinator, Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department,
103 South Main Street, 10 South, Waterbury, VT 05676

Name

Organization

Mailing Address

City

State Zip

Telephone

Email

- I will attend the Conservation Partner meeting on March 24th, 2004
- I cannot attend the meeting but I am interested in serving as a Conservation Partners.
- I am unable to serve on the Conservation Partners Team.
 - Please send me updates on the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy.
 - I do not wish to receive future information on this topic.

For more information contact

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Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department
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Waterbury, VT 05676

(p) 802-241-3652 (f) 802-241-3295
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May 6th, 2004

Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy Update

Dear CWCS Conservation Partner,

As promised at our meeting at Lake Morey on March 24th, I'm writing with an update on progress made on Vermont's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy. The past few weeks have been busy as the Steering Committee, Species Team leaders and I have worked with the feedback we received from you to improve the CWCS process. I believe that we've done a good job of it and, we will soon be ready to set loose the Species Teams to do their jobs. However, before that happens I wanted to send you this CWCS update that includes:

- 1) A [responsiveness summary](#) addressing the comments, questions and feedback we've received so far from Conservation Partners and others interested in conserving Vermont's wildlife. In general we have sought to balance the desire for greater input, more frequent updates and opportunities for information sharing with your requests not to be deluged with email and regular mail.
- 2) [Changes and improvements made to the CWCS process](#). Based on your suggestions we've made a couple of changes to the process originally outlined at the Lake Morey meeting on 3/24/04. In particular we've added a new Conservation Strategies Review team to the array of CWCS committees and teams. This is in direct response to requests by Conservation Partners for added participation in the development of conservation strategies. We've also change the name of the Conservation Science Team to Integration Team to better reflect the role that this team will play.
- 3) [Appointments to the CWCS technical teams](#) and updated list of Conservation Partners
- 4) [Technical Team Meetings and Meeting Policies](#) for technical team meetings.
- 5) [Next steps](#) in the development of Vermont's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy.

Please review the documents on the following pages and let me know if you have any further comments or suggestions.

1. Responsiveness Summary to feedback and comments received during and after the CWCS meeting at Lake Morey Resort, Fairlee, VT on March 24, 2004.

Dear Conservation Partner,

Many, many excellent, thought-provoking comments and suggestions were received at the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy meeting at Lake Morey on March 24th. We have done our best to incorporate your recommended improvements/amendments to the CWCS process. Below you'll find an edited and condensed list of the comments (similar comments were grouped to reduce redundancy) along with Fish and Wildlife Department (FWD) actions and responses. Comments are listed in bold text below. If a number in parentheses follows a comment it signifies the number of times a similar response was received. Responses follow each comment in plain text.

Project Scope

Taking a species by species approach to conservation won't work. There are too many species and not enough is known about most of them. An approach focusing on habitats/natural communities and threats to them will be more effective. (9)

The Fish and Wildlife Department chose to develop the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy using a species by species format so that the product will be more understandable to the lay audience. However, we realize that 1) in many cases the needs of multiple species overlap; and, 2) that we have species of wildlife in Vermont that are poorly documented or understood. In both of these cases, management for habitats/natural communities is the prudent and most cost-effective way to address the needs of many species. The Integration Team will likely employ habitat/natural community conservation measures when it begins synthesizing the work of the six species teams. Furthermore the Conservation Strategy Review Team (a new team, see the Process & Teams section below) will likely take a similar approach.

In assessing threats look at common threats across species (also strategies).

Each of the six species teams (birds, fish, invertebrates, mammals, plants, and reptiles and amphibians) will likely do this for wildlife within their charge. The Integration Team and Conservation Strategy Review Team will do the same for all species across all taxa as they look for overarching solutions to conservation threats.

Will new species be addressed? Will species be reintroduced?

Species that have not historically been found in Vermont will likely not be addressed as part of Vermont's CWCS (except where they pose threats to native species). Regarding reintroductions: federal guidelines for CWCS development and implementation define wildlife as "any species of wild, free-ranging fauna including fish, and also fauna in captive breeding programs the object of which is to reintroduce individuals of a depleted indigenous species in a previously occupied range." Therefore species reintroduction is permissible.

We don't know if Vermont's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy will ultimately include a recommendation or recommendations for species reintroductions, but discussions about the efficacy of reintroduction of extirpated wildlife should certainly take place amongst the technical teams.

Define the end goal (products) for the CWCS early in order to establish direction for the process. (5)

Congress' requirement that state Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies must address the broad range of wildlife and wildlife-related issues (keep common species common) *and* place appropriate priority on “species of greatest conservation need” (focus on wildlife that have not benefited from wildlife and sportfish restoration funding) is a tall order. Our goal is to develop a CWCS that will: 1) identify species, habitats, threats and strategies; and, 2) serve as a blueprint that all interested agencies and organizations can use to proactively conserve Vermont's wildlife.

What is the Fish and Wildlife Department's commitment (time and money)? (3)

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department is fully committed to the development and implementation of the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy. We've hired one full-time staff person as project coordinator (Jon Kart), seven FWD staffers are leading technical teams with six other staffers serving as technical team members. Additional FWD staff will assist in CWCS development and implementation on project-by-project bases (examples include public outreach and data development). Finally, senior level staff serves as the CWCS Steering Committee ensuring department-wide support.

Coordinate with other states so we can learn what they are doing, and so that we can work together on larger regional issues rather than just looking within our own borders. Also: Rely on the Vermont Biodiversity Project and other resources. (2)

Interstate coordination is the seventh of eight Congressional requirements for all Conservation Strategies: Coordinate the development, implementation, review, and revision of the CWCS with Federal, State, and local agencies and Indian tribes. One of the many great things about this CWCS process is that all 50 states along with a number of territories and Native American tribes are developing their Conservation Strategies at the same time. Interstate meetings and communication are being facilitated by the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

The work Vermont Biodiversity Project and other planning efforts will certainly be reviewed in the development of Vermont's CWCS. We do not want to reinvent wheels. If good science and planning information exists, we hope to use it wisely.

What happens after October 2005?

The implementation phase begins. We hope that most, if not all of our Conservation Partners will join the Fish and Wildlife Department in implementing strategies outlined in the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy.

Process & Teams

The organization chart needs to be shortened condensed— too much too soon. (3)

The mix of teams and committees proposed to tackle the CWCS mirrors the complexity of the task at hand. Collecting and analyzing scientific data and developing strategies and policies are difficult in themselves. Maximizing the participation of a broad array of partners—without overtaxing them—makes CWCS development doubly challenging. We believe that the process outlined in this document is as streamlined as we can get and still involve as many voices as possible.

The CWCS process needs to integrate policy early on instead of just focusing on biology and ignoring broader policy issues. Species teams should not be only taxonomists and biologists. Bring in others for strategy development. (4) Species “threats and strategies” should be separate team “boxes” that conservation partners are involved with (i.e., a “strategies” team).

The initial three steps in development of a Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy are primarily biological: 1) Identify wildlife distribution and abundance; 2) Identify the location and assess the condition of key habitats and community types; and, 3) Identify key threats and research needs. Inserting policy issues at this stage would be premature. Once these steps have been accomplished then we can begin identifying conservation strategies and other policy issues.

We have added an additional team to the equation (see the top of the right column of the attached organizational chart). The Conservation Strategy Review Team (CSR) to the process. The CSR will receive a draft list of threats, goals and strategies facing wildlife from the Integration Team. They will review the draft and provide feedback to the Integration Team about the efficacy of the strategies. The CSR can develop additional strategies where they see fit.

What are the criteria for placing people on a species team?

Species team members should have training and experience in a taxonomic specialty sufficient to allow them to critically analyze life history requirements, threats to population persistence, and needed conservation actions. The Steering Committee sifted through the list of technical team nominees looking for people with technical expertise for as broad a suite of species as possible. We tried to not select people with a single species focus in order to get the broadest coverage of wildlife expertise on a team while keeping the team size small (to maximize effectiveness). We expect that technical team members will participate to share their expertise, not to represent their organization’s or agency’s position.

Work partners and volunteers more in the process and plan.

We’ve done our best to include a broad array of partners on the various technical teams while keeping in mind advice from several Conservation Partners that as teams get larger their effectiveness wanes. We’ve tried to keep the size of our Species Teams to five-seven people. We do welcome additional organizations and agencies to participate as Conservation Partners. If you know of additional entities that should be involved in the CWCS, please have them contact Jon Kart, CWCS Coordinator at 802-241-3652 or jon.kart@anr.state.vt.us.

Somewhere in the process there must be a place to resolve conflicts on products. (2)

The Integration Team will address conflicts that develop within and among the Species Teams and the Conservation Strategies Review Team. If conflicts cannot be settled by the Integration Team then they will be addressed by the CWCS Steering Committee and, if needed, the Commissioner of the Fish and Wildlife Department.

Open the Steering Committee to others than Fish and Wildlife employees. (3) The steering committee should solicit partners’ guidance on pending issues before a final decision is made.

State Fish and Wildlife departments have been given statutory responsibility by Congress for completion of Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies and for management of State Wildlife Grant funds. For efficiency and accountability we believe that the Steering Committee should remain Fish and Wildlife Department directors only. The

role of the Steering Committee is to provide coordination and continuity during the development of the CWCS. For those that want additional input and oversight during the development of the CWCS we've created the Conservation Strategy Review Team (see above).

Communications with Conservation Partners and the Public

Use a web-based process to allow immediate updates and input. (4) The interested public should have a conduit for submitting comments.

We are currently working on improvements to the Fish and Wildlife Department's website to allow for the posting of timely updates and meeting schedules and to announce important dates and decision-making points. This site should include interactive opportunities to allow Conservation Partners and the general public to ask questions and post comments directly to the site. Partners and the general public could then respond directly to the list of species of greatest conservation need, alert us to what they deem to be key threats to wildlife, etc. We will also explore opportunities to use interactive television to make our meetings more accessible to partners and the general public.

Alert the public more frequently, not just for the final review. (3) Could conservation partners be used for public outreach?

A public outreach effort has already begun. Almost 3,000 copies of *Fish & Wildlife Conservation News* have been distributed across the state. This new newsletter highlights projects currently funded by State Wildlife Grants and introduces readers to the CWCS. The next issue will be out in fall 2004. A media plan is in development. We want to encourage print, radio and TV outlets to spotlight CWCS efforts and projects currently funded by the State Wildlife Grants. We hope that Conservation Partners will inform their members and the general public about the CWCS too. A sample story for organization's newsletters will be drafted and distributed to all Conservation Partners. To get additional information or to provide feedback the public will be directed to the website mentioned above.

Supply partners with the list of reference materials used by the species teams.

Technical teams will cite all references used in the development of their reports. Where possible, lists of reference materials expected to be used during future team meetings will be posted for Conservation Partner review. Please note that the timeline for completing this project is a short one and it may not be possible to provide much if any advance notice of specific topics of future meeting and/or lists of reference materials to be used. Partners could also supply teams with relevant reference materials.

Time needs to be built in process so that the advisory group can be brought up to a common level (maybe use web-based application to get information out). (2) Prefer regular check-in/update opportunities for Conservation Partners that won't limit the ability of teams to get work done.

Unfortunately, time is in short supply, both for completing the CWCS by the Congressionally mandated deadline of October 1, 2005 and for many of you busy with your own projects and organizational responsibilities—as many Conservation Partners have told us. We will do our best to provide Conservation Partners with the information they need to stay informed and knowledgeable. We will explore web-based opportunities for disseminating and sharing information. We will also explore opportunities for using interactive television. This latter idea may prove more useful to the technical teams.

We can arrange to have regular, brief, targeted updates posted to the VT Fish & Wildlife Department's website. An email update of CWCS progress can also be sent out regularly.

Outreach

Where are representatives from Forest, Parks and Recreation and other departments?

The Lake Morey meeting was aimed at executive directors of agencies and organizations to introduce the CWCS to the state. Forest, Parks and Recreation was fully represented by Operations Director Ed Leary. Since that meeting we've met with additional FPR directors and with directors of other agencies to identify key individuals within the department who should be taking the lead for their agencies.

All landowners need to be involved and at an earlier level (include Farm Bureau) (2) Outreach to private landowner may be a role for some of the Conservation Partner organizations.

The Vermont Grange and several consulting foresters/landowner representatives were at the Lake Morey meeting. The Farm Bureau is a CWCS Conservation Partner but unfortunately could not attend the meeting in Lake Morey.

If one or more Conservation Partners would like to play a role in outreach to private landowners, please contact Jon Kart CWCS Coordinator at 802-241-3652, jon.kart@anr.state.vt.us

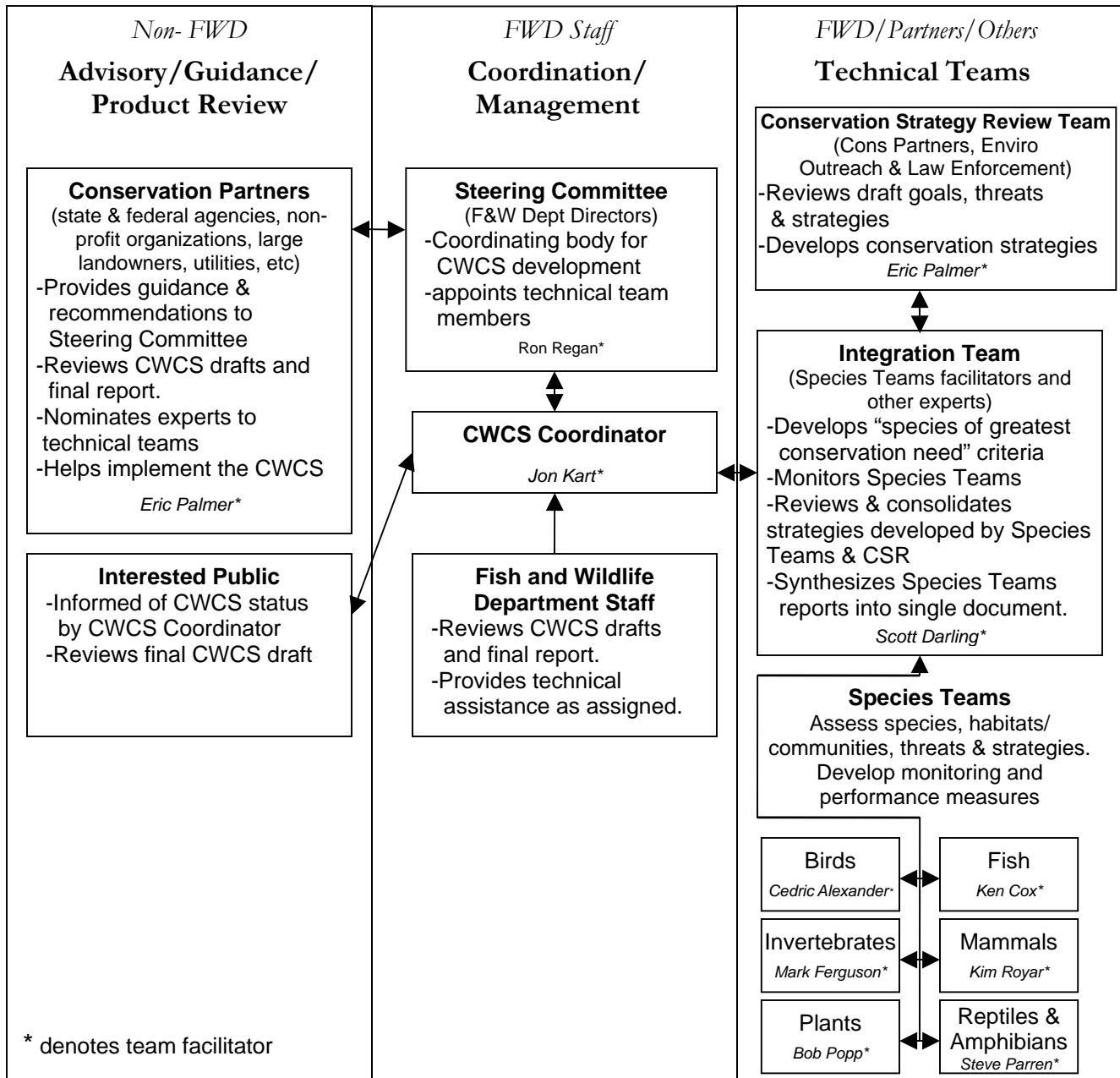
Academics need more involvement, particularly at species level.

Several have been added to technical teams.

Committed youth (e.g. selected high school students) should be involved at partner level.

If one or more Conservation Partners would like to take the lead in identifying and educating interested youth, please contact Jon Kart CWCS Coordinator at 802-241-3652, jon.kart@anr.state.vt.us

2) VT Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy Roles & Workflow



Approximate timeline

Develop CWCS process	Provide advice on CWCS process	Identify "species of greatest conservation need"	Identify habitats and threats. Develop conservation strategies	Strategy review & development	Interim review	Synthesize Species Teams' reports, prioritize strategies.	Draft CWCS. Develop monitoring protocols, performance measures.	Public review	Finalize CWCS, submit to USFWS
<i>Steering Comm.</i>	<i>Conserv Partners</i>	<i>Species Teams</i>	<i>Species Teams</i>	<i>CSR</i>	<i>Conserv Partners-FWD Staff</i>	<i>Integration Team</i>	<i>Integration Team -CWCS Coordinator</i>	<i>Gen Public</i>	<i>CWCS Coord</i>
Jan 2004									July 2005

Roles of the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy Teams and Committees

Conservation Partners (state & federal agencies, non-profit organizations, large landowners, utilities, State legislators, academics, and others)

- Provides guidance and recommendations to the Steering Committee.
- Reviews interim and final CWCS drafts.
- Nominates experts for participation on technical teams.
- Helps implement the CWCS upon its completion.

Steering Committee (Fish and Wildlife Department Directors, Nongame and Natural Heritage Program Coordinator, FWD Planner)

- Executive body for the CWCS development and implementation with statutory responsibility for completion of the CWCS and management of State Wildlife Grant funds.
- Provides leadership and organizational commitment to ensure success of the CWCS.
- Encourages meaningful participation and buy-in among partners.
- Appoints members to technical teams.

CWCS Coordinator (Fish and Wildlife Department staff)

- Manages the project.
- Supports activities of the technical teams.
- Manages outreach and communications.

Conservation Strategy Review (CSR) (Conservation Partners as well as designees from the environmental education and wildlife law enforcement communities)

- Reviews threats and draft strategies suggested by the Species Teams.
- Develops additional strategies as needed.

Integration Team (Species Team facilitators plus additional Fish & Wildlife staff and non-staff experts).

- Develops criteria for designating species of greatest conservation need.
- Keeps Species Teams on schedule.
- Synthesizes reports of the Species Teams and strategies developed by the Conservation Strategy Review
- Identifies gaps in information and addresses special habitat and natural community needs.
- Prioritizes strategies and solutions to conservation challenges.

Species Teams (Fish and Wildlife staff, partners, and other experts as needed) Species teams: 1) Birds, 2) Fish, 3) Mammals, 4) Reptiles & Amphibians, 5) Invertebrates, 6) Plants

- Develop and refine lists of species of greatest conservation need.
- Assess species distribution and abundance, identify habitats/natural communities, threats & strategies.
- Develop monitoring and performance measures.
- Recommend draft strategies for managing species of greatest conservation need.
- Address comments made by Conservation Partners during interim review.

Interested Conservation Public

- Will be kept informed of the status of the CWCS by the CWCS Coordinator. Methods of communication may include brochures, newsletters, website, public meetings, media outlets.
- Will be asked to provide comments on the final draft.

3) Appointments to the CWCS Technical Teams as of 5/4/04

Birds

*Cedric Alexander
Eric Derlath USFWS
Patrick Doran, Wildlands Project
Margaret Fowle, NWF
John Gobeille, VFWD
Paul Karczmarczyk, RGS invited
Mark Labarr, Audubon
Chris Rimmer, VINS
Allan Strong, UVM

Fish

*Ken Cox
Doug Facey, St. Michaels College
Anne Hunter, VFWD
Rich Langdon, VDEC
John Lepore, VTrans
Craig Martin, USFWS
Donna Parrish, VT Coop
Steve Roy, USFS

Reptiles & Amphibians

*Steve Parren
Jim Andrews, Middlebury College
Steve Faccio, VINS
Chris Slesar, VTrans

Invertebrates

*Mark Ferguson
Steve Fiske VDEC
Trish Hanson, VFPR
Bryan Pfeiffer, VT Bird Tours
Kent McFarland

Mammals

*Kim Royar
Pat Bartlett, Consulting Foresters Assoc VT
Tom Decker, VFWD
Bill Kilpatrick, UVM
John Sease, USFS
Peter Smith, Green Mtn College
Charles Wood, UVM retired

Plants

*Bob Popp
Dorothy Allard, Scientific Advisory Group on Flora
Errol Briggs, VT Grange
Anne Bove, VDEC
Mary Beth Deller, USFS
Brett Engstrom, Scientific Advisory Group on Flora
Diana Frederick, VFPR
Marc Lapin, ESC Scientific Advisory Group on Flora
Annie Reed, ESC Scientific Advisory Group on Flora
Susan Warren, VDEC
Mike Winslow, Lake Champlain Committee

Integration Team

*Scott Darling
Christa Alexander, VFWD
John Austin, VFWD
Farley Brown, VT Coverts
Doug Burnham, VDEC
Dave Capen, UVM
Kathy Daly, Wildlands Project
Therese Donovan, VT Coop
Paul Fredrick, VFPR
Clay Grove, USFS
Liz Thompson, UVM
Keith Weaver, USFWS

Cedric Alexander (ad hoc)
Ken Cox (ad hoc)
Mark Ferguson (ad hoc)
Steve Parren (ad hoc)
Bob Popp (ad hoc)
Kim Royar (ad hoc)

Conservation Strategy Review Team

*Eric Palmer
Conservation
Rob Borowske, F&W Board
Gina Campoli, VTrans
Clint Gray, VFSC invited
David Kelley, Ski Areas Assoc
Warren King, Audubon
Sherb Lang, HAT
Leo Laferriere, SAF
Virginia Rasch, AVCC
John Roe, TNC
Dave Tilton, USFWS
Jim Wood, NCE&F

Education
Sally Laughlin, ESC
Ginger Anderson, VFPR
Mark Scott, VFWD

Law Enforcement
Bob Rooks, VFWD
Mark Sweeny, USFWS
Federal agent TBA

** denotes team facilitator*

Conservation Partners of the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy

as of 4/26/04

American Chestnut Foundation	Smugglers Notch Resort
Association of VT Conservation Commissions	Sportsmen Inc
Audubon Vermont	US Fish & Wildlife Service, Lake Champlain Fish & Wildlife Resources Complex
Burlington Electric Department	US Fish & Wildlife Service, Missisquoi NWR
Center for Woodlands Education	US Fish & Wildlife Service, Nulhegan Basin Division
Connecticut River Watershed Council	UVM School of Natural Resources
The Conservation Fund	VT Agency of Transportation
Consulting Foresters Association of VT	VT Association of Snow Travelers
Ducks Unlimited	VT ATV Sportsman's Association, Inc
Echo	VT Bird Tours
Endangered Species Committee	VT Cooperative Fish & Wildlife Research Unit
Fairbanks Museum & Planetarium	VT Coverts
Forest Watch	VT Department of Environmental Conservation
Green Mountain National Forest	VT Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation
Hunters, Anglers & Trappers Assoc of VT	VT Farm Bureau
Keeping Track, Inc	VT Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs
Lake Champlain Committee	VT Fish & Wildlife Board
Lake Champlain International, Inc.	VT Forest Products Association
Lake Champlain Land Trust	VT Institute of Natural Sciences
Lake Champlain Walleye Association	VT Land Trust
Gale Lawrence	VT Loggers Association
Lewis Creek Association	VT Natural Resources Council
Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller NHP	VT Outdoor Guides Association
National Wild Turkey Federation	VT Ski Area Association
National Wildlife Federation	VT State Grange
Natural Resources Conservation Service	VT Trappers Association
Nature Conservancy	VT Woodlands Association
New Haven River Anglers Association	Wildlands Project
North Country Environmental & Forestry	
Ruffed Grouse Society	Representative Steve Adams
Ryegate Power Station	Office of Congressman Sanders
Sam Shultis	Office of Senator Jeffords
Sierra Club	Office of Senator Leahy
Society of American Foresters	

4) CWCS Technical Team Meetings and Meeting Policies

The Integration team and the six species teams will begin meeting in May (the Conservation Strategy Review team will start in September). These meetings will be open to the public. Once the teams develop their meeting schedules I will contact you again via email to inform you of the schedules. When our CWCS website is running we will post the schedules there.

The eight technical teams (Conservation Strategy Review Team, Integration Team and the six Species Teams) are charged with developing much of the science and strategies for Vermont's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy. Time is short and these are huge responsibilities. To help these teams work effectively the following meeting policies have been developed. Team members and meeting guests are urged to respect them.

- Team members are expected to share their expertise in wildlife conservation, not to represent their organization's or agency's position.
- Team appointments are for individuals, not organizations—no proxies for meeting representation will be allowed. To ensure continuity and team efficiency from meeting to meeting the same organization representative must come to each meeting.
- Team meetings are working meetings with full agendas and members need to focus on their time-sensitive responsibilities. Non-team members are welcome to attend primarily as observers. Non-members may provide timely and appropriate information. However, little time can be devoted to review or to help non-members get “up-to-speed.” A few minutes will be reserved at the beginning and end of each meeting to take comments and answer questions.
- To encourage free and open discussions and information sharing during meetings, team members and guests need to recognize that all documents and information produced and developed by a team, and discussions had within and among teams, are to be considered drafts, or for discussion purposes only, until officially approved by a team. If information is shared outside the team, all recipients should be made aware of the preliminary nature of the information.

If warranted, additional policies and meeting guidelines may be adopted.

5) Next Steps

The Integration team and the six species teams will begin meeting in May (the Conservation Strategy Review team will start in September). Once the teams develop their meeting schedules I will contact Conservation Partners again via email with the meeting schedules and will post schedules to a VT-CWCS as soon as possible. You are welcome to attend meetings. Please note, however, that these will be working meetings with full agendas. Guidelines for meeting formats and protocols can be found in the previous section of this letter.

The first step for the Integration Team will be to define criteria for the designation of “species of greatest conservation need.” Once this occurs, the six species teams will begin developing their lists of species of greatest conservation need. If you are interested in the criteria for designating of “species of greatest conservation need” let me know and I will email it to you. When the lists of species of greatest conservation need are developed by the species teams I will collect them and send them to you for review.

Once the species teams have generated their lists of species of greatest conservation need they will further assess the abundance and distribution of these species, and identify habitats for the species of greatest conservation need. It is possible that this may result in adjustments to the species lists.

While this is taking place I will be working on the CWCS outreach plan to inform the general public about Vermont’s Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy.

The Conservation Strategy Review team will meet in September for two or three meetings to review a draft list of goals, threats and strategies developed by the species teams and to develop additional strategies as needed.

Though much work lies ahead of us, I’d like to thank you for your help so far. Your feedback and suggestions have improved the process we will use to complete this project. Your help on technical teams and as Conservation Partners providing guidance and oversight during the coming months will ensure that we do our utmost to conserve Vermont’s wildlife. Please feel free to contact me with any additional comments or suggestions. We remain open to making the process more effective and responsive.

Thanks for your time.

Sincerely,

Jon Kart
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103 South Main Street, 10 South
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September 4, 2004

Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy Update#2

Hello,

It's been a busy and productive summer for the teams developing Vermont's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy and I want to take a moment to provide you with a progress report. I'd also like to inform you that after a lot of work, a VT-CWCS website is finally up and running. This website will make it easier for you to access background information on the CWCS, track the progress of the project and team meeting schedules.

The address is http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com/swg_home.cfm

I encourage you to alert members of your respective organizations and other friends of wildlife and interested parties to the existence of this site.

Progress Report by team/committee:

The Conservation Partners has not met since it first got together at the Lake Morey Inn in March 2004. A summary and recommendations that came from that meeting was part of the Conservation Partners Update #1 which was sent to you in May. If you did not receive that update please let me know and I will send it to you.

The Conservation Partners will not meet again until a draft of the CWCS is ready for your review. We originally projected that date to be this November, but a thorough reality check informs us that a draft won't be ready till late February. We value your time and we want to give you something substantive to work with. An updated schedule follows at the end of this note.

Most of the work on the CWCS during the last three months has been done by the six Species Teams (Bird, Fish, Invertebrate, Mammal, Plant, and Reptile & Amphibian). They have the huge task of conducting the basic species assessments--pouring over distribution data and discussing meta-population and viability reports. Their short term goal is to develop a list of Species of Greatest Conservation Need. A *draft* list should be complete by mid-September. When it is ready I will post it to the website and send you a reminder.

Once that list is complete, the Species Teams will focus on identifying key habitats for the Species of Greatest Conservation Need, conducting threat and opportunity assessments and developing conservation strategies.

That work should be completed by Nov 1st. Then the Integration Team takes over and will join together the work of the six Species Teams. Over the last couple of months the Integration Team has met to provide guidance to the Species Teams and to develop a database and integration plan that will be used to collect and analyze data developed by the Species Teams.

A draft Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy will be prepared for the Conservation Strategy Review team (CSR) to review at their initial meeting in early December and subsequent meeting in early January. The CSR will review the document and strategies and make recommendations to add/change strategies, gather public input on the strategies, and works with the Integration Team to finalize the strategies.

The CWCS development schedule follows below.

CWCS Timeline

2004

- Sept Species Teams complete drafts of Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) lists.
- Sept Fish & Wildlife Dept. Commissioner and Integration Team review draft SGCN list
- Sept Draft SGCN list is then distributed to Conservation Partners and Conservation Strategy Review team
- Nov Species Teams complete their draft reports (reports go to the Integration Team)
- Dec Integration Team completes their review of the Species Teams reports and completes a draft of the CWCS (this is sent to the Conservation Strategy Review team (CSR)).
- Dec Conservation Strategy Review team meets to review the draft CWCS and begins work on strategies assessment/development

2005

- Jan Conservation Strategy Review team reconvenes to complete its report
- Jan Integration Team reviews the CSR report, drafts a responsiveness summary and incorporates CSR recommendations into the CWCS
- Jan Draft CWCS to Fish & Wildlife Dept. Commissioner and Steering Committee

- Feb Draft & comments back from the Commissioner and Steering Committee
- Feb Draft of CWCS is sent to Conservation Partners for review
- Mar Conservation Partners meet to discuss and review the draft CWCS
- Apr Steering Committee completes and distributes a responsiveness summary based on Conservation Partner feedback.
- May Public review of the draft CWCS begins
- May Public review ends
- July CWCS completed

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January 9, 2005

Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy Update#3

Dear Conservation Partner,

Happy New Year. I'm writing with an update about Vermont's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS) as well as to share some good news about the State Wildlife Grants program with you.

The teams developing the CWCS have made great progress since the last update. The CWCS Species Teams (Birds, Fish, Invertebrates, Mammals, Plants and Reptiles & Amphibians) have just about completed full assessments of our Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). This includes identifying known distribution and abundance, habitat descriptions, threats and limiting factors, research and inventory needs and conservation strategies for each SGCN.

Our CWCS Integration Team is quickly piecing together the myriad species, habitat and landscape components into a recognizable plan. They have had to integrate information on more than 250 wildlife species and 400 plants into the 25 habitat types that will form the backbone of our report. In addition the Conservation Strategy Review team held its first organizational meeting and will soon begin prioritizing threats and reviewing strategies.

Our pace has been fast and furious. As we hurtle towards our July 2005 deadline I doubt the pace will slow. We've had to make a little more room in our timeline for both the Integration Team and Conservation Strategy Review team to complete their tasks. This will ensure that the draft CWCS that we bring to you will be complete. We now anticipate a Conservation Partner Review meeting in early May to review the draft document and a public review in June. I will contact you with specific dates as soon as possible.

For those of you who just can't wait to see what a comprehensive strategy looks like, I recommend that you check out North Carolina's version. NC is a few months ahead of Vermont (and most other states) and has posted several sections of their CWCS on the web for the public review. You can find it at http://www.ncwildlife.org/pg07_WildlifeSpeciesCon/pg7c1_3.htm. Vermont's CWCS will be organized similarly.

CWCS in the News: Our CWCS has received a good deal of media attention recently. This includes a Free-Press editorial (1/2/05), a Times-Argus article (12/30/04) (links below). The Associated Press evidently picked up the story too. Please let me know if you saw/heard a story elsewhere as I'm trying to keep track of them.

Burlington Free Press: Editorial 1/2/05:

<http://www.burlingtonfreepress.com/bfpnews/editorial/sunday/1000h.htm>

Times-Argus: Article 1/30/04:

<http://www.timesargus.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20041230/NEWS/412300377/1002>

CWCS Outreach to members and constituents: If your organization or agency has a newsletter or website, please consider including a notice about this project and upcoming public review opportunities in your next issue. A sample article follows at the end of this message, please feel free to adapt it as needed. I would also be happy to give a presentation about the CWCS at one of your meetings.

From the Department of Good News: Though most programs in the recently passed federal budget received significant budget cuts, the State Wildlife Grants program (SWG) actually grew to \$69 million from \$67.5 million the previous year. SWG provides funding to States to prevent wildlife species from becoming endangered. Vermont will receive more than \$600,000 in SWG funds to continue our work conserving Vermont's wildlife and to start implementing the CWCS. This is certainly good news. It also underscores the strong bi-partisan support that wildlife conservation and the State Wildlife Grants have in Congress and with the current Administration.

If you have questions about this update or anything else related to the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy please contact me anytime at 802-241-3652 or jon.kart@anr.state.vt.us. You can also find information at the VT CWCS website: http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com/swg_home.cfm. I encourage you to alert members of your respective organizations and other friends of wildlife and interested parties to the existence of this site.

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely, Jon

Jon Kart
CWCS Coordinator

---The following is a sample article about the CWCS. Please free to adapt it to best fit your agency's or organization's newsletter or website---

Vermont's Wildlife Get a Check-Up

An unprecedented evaluation of Vermont wildlife is underway. _____ [your organization] the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department and biologists, ecologists, sportsmen and conservationists representing more than 60 agencies and organizations have teamed-up to give Vermont's wildlife a check-up.

From to black bear to golden-winged warbler, silver redhorse to blue-spotted salamander, experts are gauging the health of wildlife populations and developing prescriptions for healthy wildlife futures.

Next fall, when the work is complete, Vermont will have its first Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS). "The CWCS will be a strategic vision for conserving the state's wildlife, one that all conservation-minded agencies and organizations can get behind," according to Jon Kart, CWCS Coordinator for the VT Fish & Wildlife Dept.

Development of the CWCS is driven by the federal State Wildlife Grants program (SWG). Preventing wildlife from becoming endangered is SWG's goal. Vermont has received more than \$2.5 million from SWG since the program's inception in 2001. "In these tight budgets times, the State Wildlife Grants program allows us to reach out and better conserve and manage more wildlife than ever before" said Wayne Laroche, Commissioner of the Fish & Wildlife Dept.

Vermont is home to 42 species of reptiles and amphibians, 58 mammals, 94 fish, 235 birds, more than 2,000 plants and many, many more insects, mollusks and other invertebrates. Assessing the status of each of these species is a huge task requiring an effort of unmatched cooperation.

Step one in developing the CWCS was identifying Vermont's Species of Greatest Conservation Need. These species were selected based on criteria such as species rarity, vulnerability to habitat fragmentation or loss, and threat by exotic plants or animals. Then teams assessed habitat quality and identified significant threats to the species. Now conservation strategies are being developed for species and their habitats.

A review draft of the CWCS and public comment period will available during the spring of 2005. Wildlife enthusiasts, landowners, businesses and the general public are encouraged to track and take part in CWCS development. More information can be found on the Vermont CWCS website: www.vtfishandwildlife/swg_home.cfm.

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February 24, 2005

Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy Update#4

Dear Conservation Partner,

I'm writing with a short CWCS Conservation Partner Update and an offer to talk to your board or membership about the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy.

The Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy is taking shape quickly as our Species Teams and Integration Team piece together reports on our Species of Greatest Conservation Need and their habitats. In addition, our Conservation Strategy Review team met for the third time last week. We received great comments and ideas on how to improve the CWCS and we're doing our best to incorporate those suggestions now.

We expect to have a draft ready for you to review in late April. Based on your feedback we will then prepare a public review draft. We will then hold public meetings on the CWCS in June.

In preparation for these events I'd like to offer to give a presentation on the CWCS to your organization's board or general membership. Please let me know at your earliest convenience if you are interested and specific date(s) that your group meets. Also, if you are looking for material for your newsletter or website, please consider adapting the sample article that follows below.

Thanks for your interest.

Sincerely, Jon

---The following is a sample article about the CWCS. Please free to adapt it to best fit your agency's or organization's newsletter or website---

Vermont's Wildlife Get a Check-Up

An unprecedented evaluation of Vermont wildlife is underway. _____ [your organization] the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department and biologists, ecologists, sportsmen and conservationists representing more than 60 agencies and organizations have teamed-up to give Vermont's wildlife a check-up.

From to black bear to golden-winged warbler, silver redhorse to blue-spotted salamander, experts are gauging the health of wildlife populations and developing prescriptions for healthy wildlife futures.

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A review draft of the CWCS and public comment period will available during the spring of 2005. Wildlife enthusiasts, landowners, businesses and the general public are encouraged to track and take part in CWCS development. More information can be found on the Vermont CWCS website: www.vtfishandwildlife/swg_home.cfm.

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April 29, 2005

Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy Update #5

Dear CWCS Conservation Partner,

I'm writing with a short CWCS Conservation Partner Update.

When I last wrote to you (Feb 2005, Update #4) about the development of Vermont's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS) I stated that we hoped to have a draft of the CWCS ready for you to review in late April. We'll, it is now April 29 and the draft is not yet ready. The reason for the delay is that, recognizing the scope and importance of the CWCS, our agency secretary has requested additional time for our three Agency of Natural Resources commissioners to complete their review of a rough draft of the document.

The commissioners will complete their review by June 1st. We will then address comments from our commissioners and will prepare draft for you to review in mid-June. Based on your feedback we will then prepare a public review draft and have it ready for distribution by mid to late-July. The federal deadline for submission to the US Fish & Wildlife Service is October 1.

In preparation for these events I'd like to offer to give a presentation on the CWCS to your organization's board and/or general membership. A number of groups have taken us up on this offer already. These briefings have been great opportunities for information exchange and idea sharing. Please let me know at your earliest convenience if you are interested and specific date(s) that your group meets.

Thanks for your interest. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions, concerns or comments.

Sincerely, Jon Kart

Go to www.vtfishandwildlife/swg_home.cfm for more information about Vermont's CWCS.

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May 16, 2005

CWCS Update #6—Partner Meeting and Report Release

Dear CWCS Conservation Partner,

I'm writing to inform you of a meeting to be held Friday June 24 to present and discuss the draft Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS) report. The meeting will run from 9am-noon and will be held in the Old Dorm Lounge at Vermont Technical College in Randolph, VT (directions below).

The draft CWCS report will be available to you at least one week prior to the meeting when we post it to the CWCS website (www.vtfishandwildlife.com/SWG_home.cfm). I will alert you when it is ready. Comments on the draft will be welcome at least through July 18.

I will send more details about the meeting as they develop. The agenda is as follows:

- 9-9:30 Registration, coffee
- 9:30-9:40 Welcome - Commissioner Laroche
- 9:40-9:55 the Future of Wildlife Conservation
- 9:55-10:25 Vermont's CWCS report (process and recommendations)
- 10:25-10:35 Break
- 10:35-noon Questions & Comments

In addition, I again offer to give a presentation on the CWCS to your organization's board and/or general membership. These briefings have been great opportunities for information exchange and idea sharing. Please let me know at your earliest convenience if you are interested and specific date(s) that your group meets.

Thank you for your interest. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions, concerns or comments.

Sincerely, Jon Kart

Directions to the Vermont Technical College:

- Take I-89 to exit 4.
- From the Exit 4 ramp, turn onto Rt. 66 heading uphill away from McDonalds. Proceed 3/4 mile to intersection at top of hill. -Drive straight through the intersection to access campus from main entrance.
- Look for signs to the Old Dorm Lounge

Go to www.vtfishandwildlife/swg_home.cfm for more information about Vermont's CWCS.

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June 20, 2005

CWCS Update #7—Partner Meeting and Report Release

Dear CWCS Conservation Partner,

On behalf of the many Conservation Partners and Vermont Fish & Wildlife Dept staff that have been working on Vermont's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS), I am pleased to announce that the Conservation Partner draft of the CWCS is now available at our CWCS website http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com/swg_cwcs_report.cfm. There you can view and download report chapters (recommended) or the entire report as a single file (NOT recommended, it's a BIG file, as a comprehensive report should be). You will find a handy online comment form there too. We would appreciate your reviewing the document and providing a feedback.

The comment period is open until July 18. Comments received before the end of this month can be incorporated into the public draft that comes out in early July.

Completing a CWCS is a requirement of the federal State Wildlife Grants program that provides funds to states to keep wildlife from becoming endangered—every state and territory in the U.S. completing one. The deadline for submission is October 1, 2005 and the CWCS teams and committees have been racing to complete the report before that date.

Please keep in mind that you are reviewing a draft document. It is not complete and will not be complete without your help. In order to meet federal deadlines for completion and submission to the US Fish & Wildlife Service, this version will undergo additional format changes. The final document will have a professional design and layout.

To make your comments most useful please provide specific feedback; give suggestions for improvement in clarity or accuracy of content; or, propose key recommendations that are missing or should be elaborated on. Doing so is much more helpful to the authors than general observations or criticisms. Specific comments about the text should include chapter, page and line numbers (e.g. "chapter 3, page 12 lines 23-24 are confusing."). Please consider addressing the following questions:

"Potential Partners" and "Potential Funding Sources": Each species and habitat strategy in this document includes fields to list both "potential partners" and "potential funding sources." The omission of any logical entities from these fields is strictly due to a lack of time. Please help us by suggesting partners and funding sources.

Don't forget: the CWCS Conservation Partner Review Meeting at Vermont Technical College is this Friday June 24. It will run from 9:30am-12:00pm. The agenda and driving directions are posted below. Please, take a moment now to let me know whether you or are coming or not and the number of people from your agency or organization will join you.

Conservation Partner Meeting Friday 6/24/05
Old Dorm Lounge at Vermont Technical College, Randolph, VT

Agenda

9-9:30 Registration, coffee
9:30-9:40 Welcome - Commissioner Laroche
9:40-9:55 the Future of Wildlife Conservation
9:55-10:25 Vermont's CWCS report (process and recommendations)
10:25-10:35 Break
10:35-noon Questions & Comments

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- Look for signs to the Old Dorm Lounge

Public Meetings: CWCS Public Meetings are scheduled for July 12 (Montpelier) and July 14 (Manchester) and will run from 7:00pm to 8:30pm. I urge you to join us there and to encourage your members to attend. You are welcome to set up a display or bring literature about your organization to the public meetings. Just let me know ahead of time so we can arrange for space. If you can't attend but want to provide me with materials to display, please mail a packet to me at the address below or give it to me at the meeting next week.

Thank you and happy reading.

Sincerely, Jon

Hey! My email address changed on 6/6/05.
It's now --> jon.kart@state.vt.us
Please update your address book. Thank you.

Jon Kart
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Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department
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