

## **Draft RESOLUTION - STATE WILDLIFE ACTION PLANS AND LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION**

WHEREAS, twenty years ago the creation of the State & Tribal Wildlife Grants Program initiated the historic development of comprehensive fish and wildlife conservation strategies, known as State Wildlife Action Plans (hereafter called SWAPs), in every state, territory, and the District of Columbia; and

WHEREAS, SWAPs identified over 12,000 species of greatest conservation need, their key habitats, threats, and conservation actions; and

WHEREAS, SWAPs have forestalled the need to list and aided in the recovery and delisting of dozens of federally threatened and endangered species; and

WHEREAS, the Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America's Diverse Fish and Wildlife Resources recommended \$1.3 billion in federal funding to implement SWAPs and the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate have introduced the Recovering America's Wildlife Act to fulfill that recommendation to help stem the loss of the nation's biodiversity; and

WHEREAS, the AFWA resolution, *Fish and Wildlife Conservation at Landscape Scales-2018-06-07*, recognizes the importance of collaborating across geographical scales and jurisdictions to assure that fish and wildlife agencies successfully accomplish their statutory responsibilities to conserve fish, wildlife, and their habitats through mutually shared priorities and coordination; and

WHEREAS, at-risk fish and wildlife populations and the natural processes and landscapes that sustain them often span multiple political boundaries requiring coordinated conservation and science to address threats and prevent endangerment; and

WHEREAS, the AFWA *President's Task Force on Shared Science and Landscape Conservation Priorities* recommended that the eight required elements and best practices for SWAPs be reviewed and recommendations be made to improve the ability of SWAPs to take on regional and landscape conservation challenges; and

WHEREAS, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (Association) recognizes the important role and unique responsibility of state, provincial and territorial fish and wildlife agencies in conserving fish and wildlife and their habitats; and

WHEREAS, state fish and wildlife agencies recognize the importance of using the best available science and collaborative approaches by working with partners, including, but not limited to, federal and other state agencies, NGOs, academia, private landowners, and private industry to advance the conservation priorities of their state; and

WHEREAS, multi-jurisdictional coordination, sharing of tools, data, and resources for SWAP development and implementation can significantly improve the efficiency and effectiveness of at-risk species conservation and serve as a basis for identifying shared priorities and coordinated conservation actions across jurisdictions and broad partnerships; and

WHEREAS, increased support and incentives are needed to help build the capacity of State Fish and Wildlife Agencies and their partners to advance regional SWAP coordination and cross-jurisdictional and landscape conservation efforts;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Association reaffirms the importance of SWAPs and the need to collaborate at regional and landscape scales to help fish and wildlife agencies meet their statutory and regulatory responsibilities to conserve fish and wildlife, their habitats, and associated biodiversity; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Association adopts the following guiding principles to strengthen the ability of SWAPs to guide and/or contribute to regional and/or national landscape conservation priorities to help ensure the next generation of SWAPs are even more effective, accessible, and relevant to agencies, partners, and other stakeholders:

1. Identify and apply regional and shared approaches for SWAP development, implementation, and measuring progress to improve effectiveness, efficiency, cost-savings, and consistency.
2. Increase consistency and alignment of SWAPs across jurisdictions so conservation can be implemented more readily at biologically relevant scales.
3. Provide support and incentives to leverage and build capacity for cross-jurisdictional and landscape conservation.
4. Ensure SWAPs are developed and implemented collaboratively and in partnership with a diverse set of partners.
5. Make SWAPs more accessible and relevant to broader constituencies; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Association adopts the recommendations of the SWAP and Landscape Conservation Work Group, *Leading At-Risk Fish and Wildlife Conservation: A framework to enhance landscape-scale and cross-boundary conservation through coordinated State Wildlife Action Plans* and acknowledges the importance of working with the Regional Associations of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, state fish and wildlife agencies, and other partners to implement said recommendations.