

# Becoming RAWA Ready in Nebraska

Melissa Panella  
Wildlife Diversity Program Manager

Ready,  
Set,  
Go!



A large, horizontal green brushstroke graphic with a textured, hand-painted appearance. The text 'Baby steps, Leaps, & Bounds' is written in white, sans-serif font across the center of the brushstroke.

## Baby steps, Leaps, & Bounds

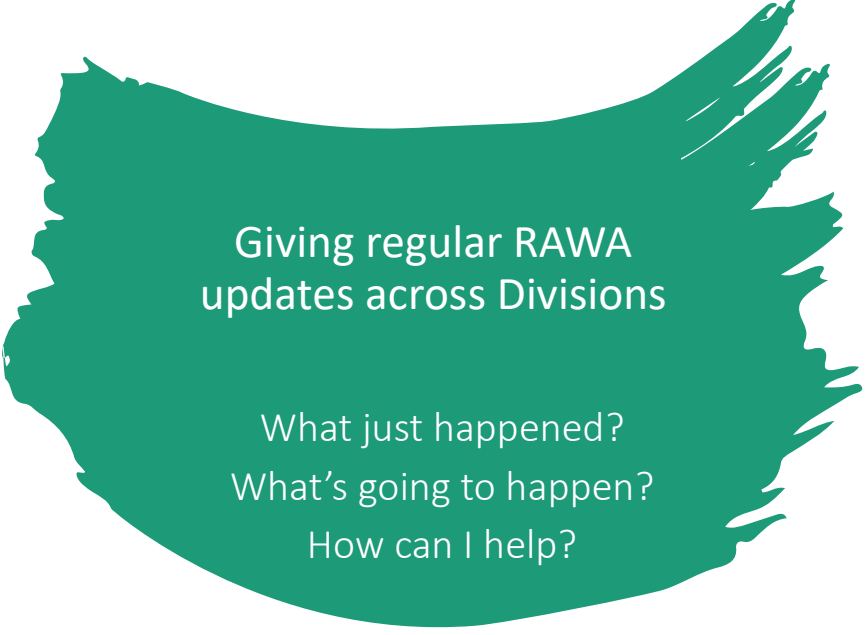
- Getting Started
- Getting Organized
- Information Digging
- Reaching Out
- Negotiating & Prioritizing
- Keeping Lines of Communication Open
- Off to the Races

Becoming RAWA Ready In Nebraska

Overview of things to think about as you get started with planning and organizing. Keeping on pace for RAWA passage.



We started simple and had fun with it. Initial brainstorming sessions with NGPC staff began a few years ago. What do you want to help you implement the NNLP? Ideas weren't debated, prioritized, or thrown out unless completely ineligible. Excitement not anxiousness.




## Giving regular RAWA updates across Divisions

What just happened?  
What's going to happen?  
How can I help?

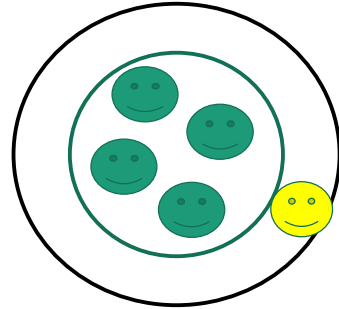
Becoming RAWA Ready in Nebraska

Beyond Wildlife Division. Being cognizant of staff time for planning. Two representatives from each of the NGPC Divisions was invited. For ex. includes Fisheries, Parks, Budget & Fiscal, Communications, F&W Education, and Law Enforcement.



## Professionally Facilitated Session with Division Administrators

Becoming RAWA Ready in Nebraska



- Overview of the Nebraska Natural Legacy Project
- Fishbowl group exercise
  - Brainstorming for your neighbor
  - What is needed in each Division?
  - Live poll via smart phone

Advantages to having someone from outside the Wildlife Div. and external to NGPC facilitate the session since the funds will NOT be exclusively for the Wildlife Division. Neutral party. Mentimeter or poll everywhere.


## Weekly Wildlife Meetings

Current Spending on Nongame  
Initiatives & Implementation  
of the  
Nebraska Natural Legacy Project

Arenas Where We Work

Small text at the bottom left of the slide: Becoming RAWA Ready in Nebraska

I've been meeting weekly with a few of my colleagues, my boss, and my boss's boss in Wildlife. Ongoing. We developed this in a spreadsheet, not necessarily by a particular SWG grant but by topic.



**Arenas**  
Version 1.4

CURRENT

- Habitat
- Inventory, Monitoring, & Evaluation
- Research
- Planning
- Education
- Communications & Outreach
- Coordination & Administration

NEW

- Wildlife-associated Recreation
- Law Enforcement

Becoming RAWA Ready in Nebraska

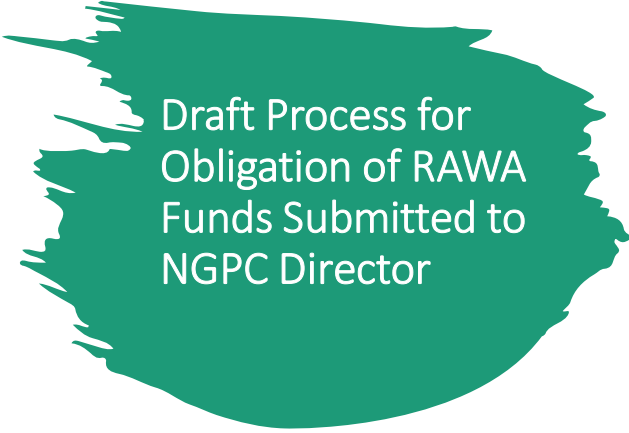
We took a while to develop definitions for each of these areas where we work. We consolidated a few arenas early on to keep this structure broad enough to work well for our purposes. I would be happy to share the definitions with anyone interested. They could still evolve further upon passage of RAWA and the associated rules.

## Inventory, Monitoring, & Evaluation

- Initiative to inventory and monitor species, natural communities, and/or landscapes, and/or evaluate the effectiveness of conservation actions to meet stated objectives

Example of arena definition developed. Took us a couple weeks to agree on definitions, and it's possible these could be revised further if needed. We distinguished inventory, monitoring, and eval. from research. I&M+E would typically be carried out by our agency staff or partner staff, whereas the research arena addresses key questions and would typically be carried out by a graduate student or professor/researcher.





Draft Process for  
Obligation of RAWA  
Funds Submitted to  
NGPC Director

- Largely mirrors current method for SWG obligation
- More external grants

Becoming RAWA Ready in Nebraska

The draft process largely mirrors how we currently handle the obligation of SWG funds. The main difference would be the opportunity to regularly offer external grants to existing and new conservation partners.



## Next Steps: Meeting with Nebraska Natural Legacy Project Partnership Team

- Explain how RAWA can implement the SWAP
- Seek their participation & support (match)

Becoming RAWA Ready in Nebraska

NNLP Team is an Advisory Team. Roles include the development and effectiveness of the SWAP and guidance for implementation. If funding allows, they vote on external proposals. Partnerships will be important for fully implementing the NNLP and holding positions. NGPC is limited in number of staff per Division by NE legislature. Will take time to request and get an increase in authority for staffing.

## Next Steps: Prioritization of Projects

- Off-the-top Initiatives
- New Projects
- What comes first?  
Shovel-ready.  
Negotiations.

Becoming RAWA Ready in Nebraska

No shortage of ideas. Need to be prioritized. If not now, when? Just because it cannot be fit within 1<sup>st</sup> year of funding doesn't mean we can't get to it in another FY.

## **Recovering America's Wildlife Act Shovel-ready Projects**

### Rainwater Basin Working Wetlands Initiative

Benefits: Provide habitat for an estimated 8.6 million migrating waterfowl 500,000 shorebirds, including the whooping cranes, and resident wildlife.

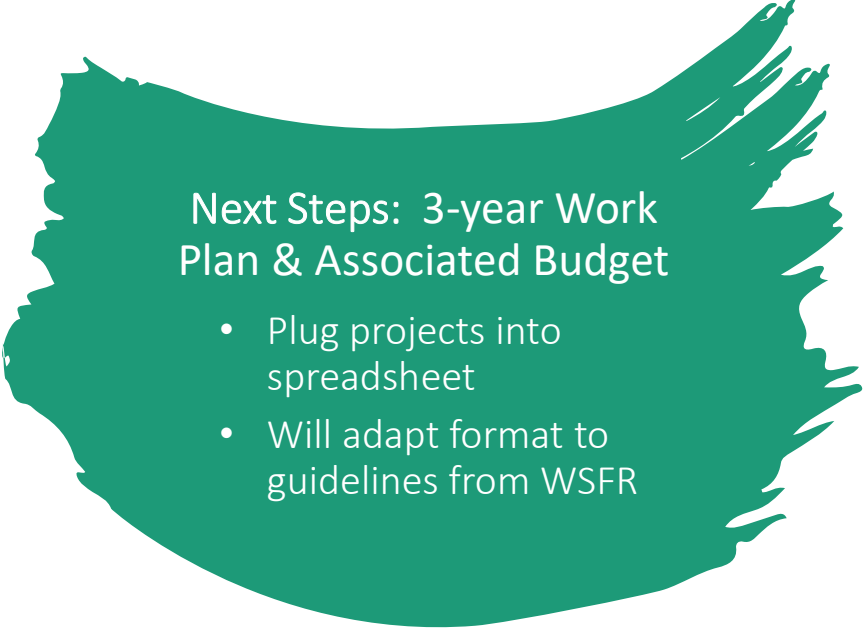
### Nebraska Prairie Stream Enhancement and Rehabilitation

Benefits: Prevent endangered listing of fish SGCN that have been experiencing significant declines.

### Conserving Nebraska Sandhills Grassland Heritage

Benefits: Grassland enhancement to conserve working farms and ranches, support rural communities and businesses, and restore productivity to the ecosystem.

These shovel-ready project ideas were shared with Nebraska's members of Congress to explain the types of things we could achieve with RAWA passage.



## Next Steps: 3-year Work Plan & Associated Budget

- Plug projects into spreadsheet
- Will adapt format to guidelines from WSFR

Becoming RAWA Ready in Nebraska

We haven't spent a lot of time estimating costs for new project ideas yet, other than for the shovel-ready projects I mentioned. Likely will use an Excel spreadsheet similar to what we did for our current spending of SWG by arena. We'll then adapt to WSFR guidelines and format.



There will be  
Time for  
Improvement.

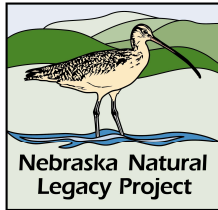
- Learn what works and what doesn't work as well.
- Adapt
- Be open and transparent
- Be reliable
- Take Action!

Becoming RAWA Ready In Nebraska

Permanent, dedicated funding gives us time to improve. In Nebraska, we want to be reliable about shovel-ready project ideas that helped RAWA gain Congressional support. I think it's important that we try to overcome any "decidophobia" and be ready to take action.

Thank you

Melissa Panella  
melissa.panella@nebraska.gov  
402-471-5444



# RAWA Arenas

Version 1.4



## Habitat

- Initiative to conduct conservation activities (e.g., prescribed fire, planting, invasive species control, easements, acquisitions) that facilitate species and ecosystem adaptation to climate change and/or promote management that is more compatible with conserving native biodiversity

## Inventory, Monitoring, & Evaluation

- Initiative to inventory and monitor species, natural communities, and/or landscapes, and/or evaluate the effectiveness of conservation actions to meet stated objectives

## Research

- Initiative to answer key questions about species, natural communities, conservation and environmental education, nature-based recreation, economic, and/or human dimensions to fill data gaps and address emerging issues

## Planning

- Initiative to facilitate activities and development of decision support tools and products that improve conservation programs and incentives and/or focus conservation on the best opportunities for at-risk species and their habitats

## Education

- Initiative to increase environmental education for diverse audiences to ensure continued and expanded awareness and support for the actions necessary to conserve native biodiversity

## Communications & Outreach

- Initiative to share and promote information important to furthering the conservation of the state's native wildlife and their habitats

## Coordination & Administration

- Initiative to increase collaboration, maintain and expand the network of public and private conservation, and/or ensure administrative support for implementation of the Nebraska Natural Legacy Project and associated grants

## Wildlife-associated Recreation

- Initiative to increase the participation in nature-based recreation to foster awareness, appreciation, and support of wildlife and the outdoors



## Law Enforcement

- Initiative to protect and conserve species of greatest conservation need and their habitats