SECTION 9 – PENNSYLVANIA'S WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN VISION, ISSUES, GOALS, OBJECTIVES

9.1 BACKGROUND.

The information in this section is presented in five sub-sections corresponding to the five major issues identified by our high-level conservation stakeholders during our WAP facilitated meeting in March 2004 (see Sections VII and VIII for a full description of the WAP Public and/or Stakeholder Involvement Processes). The order in which the sub-sections are presented reflects the priority of the issues as expressed during our facilitated meeting and public review process.

An Issue Statement and a Goal Statement introduce each sub-section. As described in Section VIII, the issues and goals were first identified during a facilitated meeting of high-level conservation partners held in early March 2004. Issue and Goal Statements have been further defined and refined by staff of the PGC and PFBC. During this process, high-level partners had opportunity to review and comment via personal communication and emails, and interested citizens were provided with opportunity to comment via the SWG Area of the PGC website.

The WAP is the framework within which annual work plans of the Wildlife Diversity Section of the PGC and the Diversity Section of the PFBC will be implemented. It will also provide the framework for selecting high-priority conservation projects to receive SWG funding. The WAP objectives serve as targets against which the PGC/PFBC Diversity Sections' performance and activities will be evaluated over the next 10 years. The objectives have been established by Section staff in consultation with agency staff from other sections and bureaus and representatives of various high-level partners in the conservation community.

9.2 PENNSYLVANIA'S-WAP: STATEWIDE VISION, PURPOSE, AND GOALS.

Pennsylvania's WAP Vision Statement:

Pennsylvanians working together to attain sustainable wildlife populations, communities and ecosystems and to prevent and reverse the declines of species.

The Purpose of the WAP is to conserve Pennsylvania's diverse wildlife, to maintain their role in ecological processes, and to protect and enhance species of conservation concern.

Pennsylvania's WAP Goals:

- Goal 1: Improve the scientific basis for making conservation decisions for wildlife, with special emphasis on species of greatest conservation concern.
- Goal 2: Plan, prioritize, and implement actions that will conserve the state's diversity of wildlife and its habitat
- Goal 3: Develop a knowledgeable citizenry that supports and participates in wildlife conservation.
- Goal 4: Ensure that the necessary resources are available to conserve Pennsylvania's wildlife.
- Goal 5: Expand and improve coordination of the public agencies and other partners in wildlife conservation planning and implementation.

9.3 PENNSYLVANIA'S-WAP: STATEWIDE ISSUES AND OBJECTIVES.

Pennsylvania's WAP Issue Statements:

Issue 1: Basis for Decision-Making

Issue Statement: There still exists a lack of basic information regarding the presence and status of many of the Commonwealth's fish and wildlife species. While volumes of information exist on some intensely-studied species, little or no information exists on others. There is a need in Pennsylvania to develop a statewide, scientifically valid inventory of our fish and wildlife species. Vital parts of this process would be to: 1) document the diversity of wildlife in Pennsylvania, including distribution, abundance, and status; 2) identify species of greatest conservation concern; 3) identify critical habitats and their status, and; 4) identify key threats to species and habitats.

Beyond the need for basic inventory data, there is a need for greater understanding of the roles of species in ecological processes and the functioning of ecosystems represented in the Commonwealth. Presently, we may make management decisions without a full understanding of the effects of those decisions. While we may understand the direct effect upon target species, we often lack information on how a management decision will affect non-target species. We rarely have the information available to make sound cost/benefit analyses regarding conservation actions. Our current management decisions are sometimes made without considering the findings and on-the-ground implications of past research. At the same time, multi-dimensional threats such as encroachment, habitat fragmentation, and exotic species are not well understood. Successful conservation requires biological information, accessible data, and knowledgeable personnel trained to interpret the facts and implement management actions.

Goal 1: Improve the scientific basis for making conservation decisions for wildlife, with special emphasis on species of greatest conservation concern.

Strategic Objective 1.1: Define and identify species of greatest conservation concern.

Operational Objectives FY 2005-2010:

- 1.1.1: Work with PABS Technical Committees to define Priority Species for the purposes of the WAP.
- 1.1.2: Support (in the form of SWG funding and/or staffing, as appropriate) inventory efforts aimed at documenting the distribution, abundance, and status of species of conservation concern in PA.
- 1.1.3: Assess the effectiveness of PA statutory language relative to Species of Special Concern.

- 1.1.4: Develop a standardized process for listing Species of Special Concern for the purposes of PA statute.
- 1.1.5: Distribute updated information on the Species of Special Concern of Pennsylvania
- 1.1.6: Assess data needs on a continuous basis and support research that fills in key information gaps regarding habitat requirements, population demographics, and effectiveness of conservation and species management efforts.

Strategic Objective 1.2: Support (in the form of SWG funding and/or staffing, as appropriate) research projects that will provide information needed for improved conservation decision-making.

- 1.2.1: Prioritize research/information needs by developing an objective prioritization process and applying the process to a comprehensive list of research needs.
- 1.2.2: Identify habitats that are critical to the conservation and recovery of species of greatest conservation concern.
- 1.2.3. Define and identify core habitats, connecting habitats, fragmentation effects, and "sink" habitats.
- 1.2.4: Assess the status of habitats that are critical to the conservation and recovery of species of greatest conservation concern.
- 1.2.5: Identify key threats affecting species of conservation concern and their critical habitats.
- 1.2.6: Increase our understanding of the effects of resource extraction, habitat management practices, and other human-induced habitat on target and non-target species.
- 1.2.7: Increase our understanding of the effects of conservation practices on target and non-target species.
- 1.2.8: Understand the effects of multi-dimensional threats that are currently not well understood (e.g. encroachment, fragmentation, exotic species, etc.)
- 1.2.9: Use adaptive management strategies to refine cause and effect relationships vis a vis habitat use, key threats, and conservation activities.
- 1.2.10: Ground-truth predictive modeling/inventory tools.

Strategic Objective 1.3: Support information management efforts that distribute new research findings and avoid redundancies.

Operational Objectives:

- 1.3.1: Assess the need for, and the feasibility of, developing a centralized electronic database/bibliography of past wildlife research conducted in the Commonwealth (Example: the annotated bibliography: Forestry, Wildlife, and Habitat in the East 1986-1990).
- 1.3.2. In cooperation with conservation stakeholders across the Commonwealth, develop/adopt a standard classification system for ecosystems, communities and critical habitats.
- 1.3.3: Develop a standardized information platform for reporting location information, habitat use, and other results of SWG-funded research.
- 1.3.4: Develop and maintain an electronic habitat/species information system to assure the continuous recording, analysis, storage, retrieval and reporting system for all species.
- 1.3.5: Assess data needs on a continuous basis.

Issue 2: Planning and implementation

Issue Statement: The Pennsylvania Game Commission as well as the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission have supported the development of recovery plans for various species of conservation concern. Few, if any, of these recovery plans have been fully implemented. Implementation of species recovery plans has been hampered by: 1) a lack of funding; 2) limited personnel to carry out on-the-ground management activities; 3) lack of coordination between stakeholders, including various land management agencies, and; 4) a failure to incorporate recommended actions into existing resource management protocols and procedures.

Many organizations and individuals regulate, influence, and undertake activities that affect species of conservation concern. Improved communication and cooperation among public agencies, private organizations, businesses and individuals are needed to maximize on-the-ground conservation efforts.

Goal 2: Plan, prioritize, and implement actions that will conserve PA's diversity of wildlife and its habitat

Strategic Objective 2.1: Program Planning

Maintain an active planning and evaluation process to keep the Pennsylvania Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy current and effective.

- 2.1.1. Review, revise, and distribute Pennsylvania's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy, with agency and public input, at intervals of not more than 10 years.
- 2.1.2. Develop an operational schedule and begin Strategy implementation within 5 years of initial Strategy approval.
- 2.1.3. Develop a system of coordination and cooperation with state, federal and local governments and conservation stakeholders in program planning and implementation.
- 2.1.4. Re-assess public needs, values and expectations on a regular basis.
- 2.1.5. Monitor implementation of the Operational Plan and assess progress on a semi-annual basis.
- 2.1.6. Establish long-term (100-year) goals and benchmarks for priority habitats and species.

Strategic Objective 2.2: Habitat Inventory and Monitoring

Identify, inventory, and monitor habitats critical to maintaining Pennsylvania's wildlife diversity.

Operational Objectives:

- 2.2.1. Develop a standardized community/habitat classification system that works at both vertebrate and invertebrate scales
- 2.2.2. Determine quantity, distribution and condition of major habitat elements on a statewide and ecoregional basis.
- 2.2.3. Identify priority habitats of concern and their ecological relationships to native species.
- 2.2.4. Monitor changes and trends in priority habitats on a basin, ecoregional and statewide basis.
- 2.2.5. Develop and maintain an electronic habitat/species information system available to staff, cooperators, and the public.
- 2.2.6. Develop a comprehensive, mapped, GIS-based approach to classifying and mapping habitats (such as GAP, TNC Ecoregional Plans, BioMap)

Strategic Objective 2.3: Habitat Conservation and Management

Identify and implement habitat conservation and management actions needed to maintain Pennsylvania's wildlife diversity.

- 2.3.1. Identify habitat conservation, restoration and management needs and opportunities for priority habitats and species.
- 2.3.2. Take actions to conserve, restore, enhance or acquire important habitat areas.
- 2.3.3. Promote land use patterns and intensities, and management practices that conserve, restore and enhance habitats needed to maintain wildlife diversity.
- 2.3.4. Evaluate effectiveness of conservation, restoration and enhancement programs, and modify those programs as needed using adaptive management principles.

Strategic Objective 2.4: Species Inventory and Monitoring

Determine the status of species, populations, and communities and monitor them on a regular basis for appraising the need for management actions, monitor the results of such actions, and evaluate other environmental changes.

Operational Objectives:

- 2.4.1. Maintain listings of species, populations, or distinct smaller groups that are, or could be, facing extinction or extirpation in Pennsylvania using appropriate categories such as: (1) endangered; (2) threatened; (3) candidate.
- 2.4.2. Determine the status of poorly known species or populations including life history requirements, taxonomic status and distribution.
- 2.4.3. Maintain listings of species, populations, communities, groups of species, or distinct smaller groups requiring special management attention.
- 2.4.4. Monitor populations of endangered, threatened and sensitive species and populations of other species requiring special management attention.
- 2.4.5. Develop and establish cooperative survey and monitoring protocols for those priority species lacking such procedures.
- 2.4.6. Monitor populations of relatively secure species with emphasis on cooperative programs involving public and private organizations and volunteers (Ex. IMA, IBA, Breeding Bird Survey, etc)
- 2.4.7. Record verified sightings of rare or unusual wildlife occurrences in a centralized GIS database.
- 2.4.8. Refine and maintain a species information system to assure the continuous recording, analysis, storage, retrieval and reporting system for all species, and to assess data needs on a continuous basis.

Strategic Objective 2.5: Species Conservation and Management

Identify, establish and implement management measures necessary for restoring threatened and endangered species; preventing sensitive species from qualifying as threatened or endangered; and maintaining or enhancing other species requiring special attention.

Operational Objectives:

2.5.1. Determine limiting or threatening factors and management needs, where not already known.

- 2.5.2. Identify measures needed to protect, restore, maintain or enhance populations of threatened, endangered and sensitive species, and others requiring special attention.
- 2.5.3. Plan and implement measures needed to protect, restore, maintain or enhance populations of threatened, endangered and sensitive species, and others requiring special attention.
- 2.5.4. Develop and implement "recovery" plans, with an emphasis on multi-species benefits, as appropriate.
- 2.5.5. Reintroduce native species or populations where they have been severely depleted or extirpated as may be biologically feasible and ecologically valid.
- 2.5.6. Conduct ecologically-based research to address incomplete information on species habitat requirements, population demographics, and effectiveness of species conservation and management programs.

Strategic Objective 2.6: Prioritizing Recovery and Management Actions Prioritize the greatest conservation needs for expenditure of limited conservation dollars.

- 2.6.1. Develop a prioritization system for implementing recovery and management actions across species and habitats.(Ex. Maine Job 113, TNC's Five-S strategy, etc)
- 2.6.2. Consider PA's role within a regional/national/global context when identifying PA "responsibility" species and communities to target for conservation action.
- 2.6.3. Develop a community status assessment tool.
- 2.6.4. Develop metrics for ranking the impacts of disturbance and other multidimensional threats.
- 2.6.5. Identify and protect conservation "hotspots" areas of high conservation value that lack either: 1) protection in terms of ownership, or 2) appropriate management activities/plans for the species/habitat of concern.
- 2.6.6. Develop and implement a standardized planning protocol that is accessible and useful for management purposes at a variety of levels.

Issue 3: Education *

* As part of the WAP development process, stakeholders identified the following statewide goals and objectives pertaining to education. Currently however, educational efforts are not supported by the State Wildlife Grants Program. Therefore, the following goals and objectives pertaining to education are not discussed in detail in subsequent WAP Sections. Limited coverage of the WAP education goals is presented in Section VII as they relate to Public Involvement. Though many of the ongoing SWG projects have an educational component, using a stakeholder-involvement process to prioritize statewide educational efforts is not within the scope of this initial WAP.

Adult Education: Pennsylvanians are overwhelmingly supportive of legal hunting and fishing, are extremely interested in fish and wildlife, and are heavily involved in wildlife-related recreation. While there is a perception that hunters and non-hunters disagree on wildlife management strategies, recent public surveys indicate that hunters and non-hunters share nearly identical levels of support for various wildlife management activities. (See Section VII, Table 7.1).

The results of a 1996 survey, "Pennsylvania Residents' Opinions On and Attitudes Toward Nongame Wildlife" clearly indicate Pennsylvania residents care about fish and wildlife resources and almost half want more information. Topics that the public was most interested in learning more about, in decreasing order of importance, included: places to view wildlife; how to view wildlife; becoming active with conservation efforts; what to do with injured wildlife; dealing with nuisance wildlife; creating backyard habitat, and; managing farms and forests for wildlife.

Early Education: Most environmental educators and psychologists agree that adult attitudes toward the natural world are greatly influenced by childhood events. Nothing seems to foster positive attitudes toward wildlife better than direct participation in wildlife-related activities. In a study on youth and their attitudes toward wildlife, researchers from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service found that children who actively watched birds, fished or hunted knew more about wildlife and the natural world than children who did not participate in these activities (Westervelt and Llewellyn 1985).

In another study of children and wildlife, Kellert and Westervelt (1983) reported that children who only learned about wildlife in the classroom or in zoos had the least real knowledge about animals and had a far less ecological perspective than other children. Learning about animals in school needs to be supplemented by direct encounters with animals and their natural habitats, whenever possible, to impart a deeper understanding and lasting knowledge of wildlife to children.

Another researcher, Dr. David LaHart, in a study of wildlife knowledge and perceptions of a group of Florida eighth-graders, found an important link between positive attitudes and wildlife-oriented activities such as camping, fishing, bird watching and hunting. Of all the variables he examined, LaHart found that participation in hiking, birdwatching, and wildlife photography exhibited the highest association with actual wildlife knowledge. He also discovered that class field-trips produced a far greater gain in

wildlife knowledge than did film-strips, class lectures, reading, or watching television shows about wildlife (LaHart 1978). It is clear that some of the best wildlife education is wildlife recreation. (Source: Responsive Management 1996).

Kellert, S.R. and M.O. Westervelt. 1983. Children's attitudes, knowledge and behaviors toward animals. Phase V of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Study, Govt. Printing Off. 024-010-006-41222, Washington D.C. 202 pp.

LaHart, D.E. 1978. The influence of knowledge on young people's perceptions about wildlife. Fla. State Univ., Tallahassee. 101 pp.

Westervelt, M.O. and L.G. Llewellyn/ 1985. Youth and Wildlife. U.S. Dept. of Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Gov. Printing Office, Washington D.C. 78pp.

Goal 3: Develop a knowledgeable citizenry that supports and participates in wildlife conservation.

Strategic Objective 3.1: Build greater public understanding and support for wildlife conservation.

- 3.1.1. Identify opportunities and implement activities that promote the values of wildlife, habitat conservation and conservation ethics.
- 3.1.2. Identify opportunities and implement activities that showcase Wildlife Diversity Program activities.
- 3.1.3. Identify important conservation issues in the Wildlife Diversity Program and ways of providing information about them to the public.
- 3.1.4. Provide science-based wildlife information to the public and the media upon request.
- 3.1.5. Keep Program supporters and other members of the public informed about the progress, activities, accomplishments, and funding of the Wildlife Diversity Program, and solicit their opinions and input.
- 3.1.6. Broaden support for the Wildlife Diversity Program by reaching out to new potential constituents.
- 3.1.7. Evaluate the effectiveness of public awareness and outreach efforts.

Strategic Objective 3.2: Encourage public input and participation in wildlife management decisions and activities.

Operational Objectives:

- 3.2.1 Identify opportunities and implement processes that encourage early and continuous public involvement in planning and implementation of wildlife diversity projects.
- 3.2.2. Seek to identify and involve the affected and interested organizations, businesses and individuals, including those traditionally underrepresented, in decisions affecting wildlife diversity conservation.
- 3.2.3. Provide timely public notice and reasonable availability of information relating to key decisions affecting wildlife diversity conservation.
- 3.2.4. Ensure that the public has opportunities to comment on draft documents affecting wildlife diversity conservation.
- 3.2.5. Encourage open and active exchange of information and ideas into the decision-making process through open public meetings or other effective means of communication.
- 3.2.6. Seek collaborative input into strategies and alternatives from the scientific and conservation communities and other appropriate individuals and organizations.
- 3.2.7 Use a combination of public involvement techniques, designed to meet the diverse needs of Commonwealth residents, to inform the public of wildlife diversity planning decisions or project implementation having significant public impact.
- 3.2.8. Produce and distribute easily understood educational materials relating to wildlife diversity planning and implementation efforts.
- 3.2.9. Establish an institutional framework to ensure continuation and participation of SWG stakeholders

Strategic Objective 3.3: Support Wildlife Conservation Education

Provide appropriate and easily understood wildlife information to educators and the public.

Operational Objectives:

3.3.1. Identify wildlife information needs of educators and ways in which the Commissions can help meet those needs.

- 3.3.2. Develop printed materials, electronic information and programs to help meet the needs of educators.
- 3.3.3. Identify wildlife information needs of the public and ways in which those needs can be met most effectively.
- 3.3.4. Implement projects that effectively convey wildlife information to the public.
- 3.3.5. Work with agencies, organizations, businesses, communities and landowners to provide wildlife-oriented educational experiences and opportunities.

Strategic Objective 3.4: Wildlife-Associated Recreation

Increase or enhance opportunities for the public to enjoy and learn about wildlife in the out-of-doors, without compromising wildlife objectives.

- 3.4.1. Identify wildlife species, animal communities and associated habitats that can provide wildlife viewing and other outdoor wildlife-oriented activities.
- 3.4.2. Identify opportunities for wildlife viewing and other wildlife-oriented activities, and measures that can be taken to provide such activities.
- 3.4.3. Implement the measures identified in order to provide wildlife viewing and other wildlife-oriented recreational opportunities.
- 3.4.4. Provide resources and expertise to other agencies, organizations, businesses, communities and landowners who wish to provide wildlife-oriented recreational experiences and opportunities.
- 3.4.5. Provide wildlife viewing and other wildlife-oriented recreational skills development opportunities for the public, in order to enhance their enjoyment of, and responsible participation in, those activities.
- 3.4.6. Conduct research on the potential impacts of recreational activities on wildlife and their habitats. Apply those results and share them with cooperators and other providers of outdoor wildlife experiences.
- 3.4.7. Monitor the impacts of recreational activities on wildlife and their habitats and modify those activities as necessary.

Strategic Objective 3.5: Ensure that private landowners are engaged in the conservation of PA's wildlife and habitats.

Operational Objectives:

- 3.5.1. Provide technical information and support to landowners, land managers and local governmental agencies regarding habitat protection, restoration, and enhancement.
- 3.5.2. Develop incentives and recognition programs to assist in the conservation, restoration and enhancement of habitats on private lands.

Issue 4: Funding and Resources

Issue Statement: Throughout their histories, both the Fish & Boat Commission and the Game Commission have relied upon hunting and angling revenues to support species management and habitat protection activities. With hunters and anglers as the direct paying constituents, the Commissions have focused management efforts primarily on 85 species of game animals and sport fish. Although the Commissions are responsible for the management and protection of both game and nongame species, directed management of the more than 400 species of nongame mammals, birds, fish, reptiles, and amphibians (as well as hundreds of invertebrate species) has been limited.

Limited license-based resources prevent the Commissions from fully meeting their mandates to manage all fish and wildlife species. Management efforts necessary to reverse or halt declines among nongame species are beyond the current manpower and financial capabilities of the Commissions. Though 'nonconsumptive' wildlife recreation (viewing, feeding, and photographing wildlife) generates significant economic returns for the Commonwealth, there is no direct funding linkage between these recreationists and Pennsylvania's fish and wildlife conservation programs. Unlike the case with hunters and anglers, nonconsumptive users do not directly support fish and wildlife management.

Wildlife-related recreation generates significant economic returns in Pennsylvania, generating \$5.87 billion in total economic impact in a single year. Yet a 1999 report by the Izaak Walton League of America ranked Pennsylvania 49th in the nation in its commitment to conservation, because of a lack of public reinvestment in fish and wildlife management. At the same time, public interest and demand for wildlife-associated education, comprehensive management efforts, and additional wildlife recreation opportunities is extremely high.

The 1996 survey, Pennsylvania Residents' Opinions On and Attitudes Toward Nongame Wildlife clearly indicated that the public is willing to support various funding mechanisms to support nongame management. Funding mechanisms identified supported by a majority of the public included: a voluntary conservation stamp (88 percent respondents supporting); increased speeding fines (63 percent support); a five percent user fee on birdseed and outdoor-related equipment (57 percent support); a fee for nonsportsmen using Gamelands (56 percent), and; a garbage tax (52 percent). At the time of the survey, Pennsylvanians' support for a small excise tax or "user fee" on outdoor

equipment was noteworthy: it was the second highest level of support found among all states previously surveyed.

Funding mechanisms deemed unacceptable by a majority of Pennsylvanians included: a gas tax; an *increase* in the state sales tax; a realty transfer tax; a water consumption tax. Interestingly, the garbage tax mentioned above received both strong support and strong opposition. Passage of such a tax would only be feasible if this strong opposition could be softened through a public information campaign.

The public opinion results also indicate a strong public preference for flagship species such as raptors and songbirds, as compared to nongame fish, mammals, reptiles or amphibians. Therefore, appeals for donations to the nongame program or public relations programs that are designed to appeal to Pennsylvanians should highlight species such as raptors, owls, cardinals, or other well-known birds. The public also was very supportive of endangered species recovery and habitat recovery (as opposed to "nongame research" or "nongame management" per se), so a public relations campaign would be most effective if it highlighted the link between nongame management and endangered species prevention and habitat protection. Pennsylvanians also were more interested in wildlife viewing opportunities than residents of other states, and this finding could be useful in designing a revenue-generating program.

Goal 4: Ensure the necessary resources are available to conserve Pennsylvania's wildlife.

Strategic Objective 4.1: Broaden the financial support for fish and wildlife management beyond traditional constituents.

- 4.1.1. Communicate the economic impact of wildlife as a way to develop public support for sustainable funding for wildlife conservation
- 4.1.2. Promote the Pennsylvania Nongame Tax Check-Off of the Wild Resources Conservation Program and other diverse funding initiatives (Ex. Wildlife For Everyone Foundation; PGC Memorial contributions through The Outdoors Shop)
- 4.1.3. Identify processes whereby people who do not hunt or fish can contribute financially to fish and wildlife management activities.
- 4.1.4. Seek funding from private foundations, individuals, corporations and/or institutions that can provide financial assistance for fish and wildlife management activities.
- 4.1.5. Maintain a grants and contracts program to support projects and activities at state and local levels that help achieve Program Objectives.

Strategic Objective 4.2: Engage the political process to ensure a steady and reliable stream of funding (>\$0)

Operational Objectives:

- 4.2.1. Maintain and increase state funding sources.
- 4.2.2. Seek cooperative funding with federal and state agency partners.
- 4.2.3. Support congressional approval of stable, long-term funding for state wildlife diversity programs.

Strategic Objective 4.3: Address the lack of expertise to address wildlife conservation needs

- 4.3.1. Recruit and maintain qualified, well-trained, and well-equipped staff and volunteers.
- 4.3.2. Conduct an assessment of personnel, facilities, support services and equipment necessary to implement the Wildlife Diversity Program at state and local levels.
- 4.3.3. Staff and equip the Wildlife Diversity Program at state and local levels to carry out laws, administrative rules and meet Program Objectives.
- 4.3.4. Maintain an active volunteer program to assist in achieving Program Objectives.
- 4.3.5. Support an active agency personnel and volunteer training program to maximize the effectiveness of the Wildlife Diversity Program.
- 4.3.6. Maintain and expand annual recognition and award programs for cooperators, citizens and volunteers.

Issue 5: Coordination

Issue Statement: To be successful, the resources of public and private organizations throughout the Commonwealth must be brought to bear on fish and wildlife conservation. Human and capital resources must be combined, coordinated, and increased in order to achieve success in conserving fish and wildlife populations and their habitats. Stakeholders in this process include decision-makers, land managers, scientists, private landowners, and conservation organizations across the Commonwealth, who collectively have the ability to meet the WAP's ambitious goals for fish and wildlife conservation. The power of conservation lies in the synergy that builds when diverse, committed partners work together toward a common goal.

This Strategy is a blueprint for fish and wildlife conservation and, as such, is not intended to replace existing or developing conservation plans at the local, regional, or state level. In fact, there are several complementary planning efforts underway that should assist in the implementation of statewide conservation action. Such plans as the PA Biodiversity Blueprint, TNC's ecoregional planning process, DCNR's Forest Resource Management Plan and the HGIS-Tier 2 planning effort, as well as individual organizations' strategic plans all have a role to play in conserving PA's valuable fish and wildlife resources. The conservation and management strategies required for several hundred species are far too complex and variable across the Commonwealth to be treated in just one plan. Further, implementation – that critical step in the process where a plan becomes an on-the-ground conservation action – must take place at state, county, township, and local levels. To be most effective, however, such actions should be guided by an overall strategy: this type of statewide guidance is what the WAP is designed to provide.

It is recognized that once statewide guidance is presented, it will be up to regional and local conservation partners to identify priority species and habitats that fall within their jurisdiction, set goals and objectives for their organization's involvement, identify local issues and opportunities, and develop strategies for implementing local conservation actions. Content of partners' plans may not be in full synchrony with the content of this WAP as a natural consequence of working at different scales and in different operating environments. It will be important over the next few years to resolve differences and arrive at better conservation objectives at all scales and for all fish and wildlife species.

Goal 5: Improve coordination of the public agencies and other partners in wildlife conservation planning and implementation.

Strategic Objective 5.1: Improve the integration and coordination of the Diversity program within each Commission.

Operational Objectives:

- 5.1.1. Integrate the WAP's goals, objectives and other plan elements throughout the Commissions' other administrative units.
- 5.1.2. Work closely with Commission bureaus, divisions, programs and regional offices to develop and implement the WAP and Operational Schedule to ensure species conservation objectives are collectively achieved.
- 5.1.3. Keep the Commission and other staff informed of WAP progress, planning activities, problems, needs and accomplishments.
- 5.1.4. Develop and maintain shared databases within the Commission.
- 5.1.5. Make use of internal training opportunities to build institutional support for holistic wildlife conservation efforts.

Strategic Objective 5.2: Improve coordination among public land management agencies to accomplish the objectives of the WAP.

Operational Objectives:

- 5.2.1. Work collaboratively through grants and contracts with other agencies and non-governmental conservation partners to facilitate the implementation of wildlife diversity projects and further program objectives.
- 5.2.2. Evaluate agency laws, authorities, rules, and cooperative agreements and their ability and effectiveness in addressing conservation needs; seek new authorities and partnerships as needed.
- 5.2.3. In areas of mutual interest and activity, clearly define who is doing what where.
- 5.2.4. Develop effective strategies to take advantage of opportunities to work together.

9.4 AGENCY STRATEGIC PLANS AND THE WAP

As discussed in Section VI of the WAP, the goals and objectives of the agencies' strategic plans encompass, both directly and indirectly, the goals and issues identified during the WAP process. This is not surprising: Issues relating to the conservation of species and habitats of concern rise above the level of the Diversity management sections to the level of the resource agencies. Moreover, such core issues as funding, public education and coordination rise beyond the level of the Commissions to the statewide level. Implementation of the goals, objectives and prioritized research and management needs presented in the WAP will only be achieved with adequate coordination, staffing and policy attention. Such a comprehensive and proactive approach will only be possible

when funding changes occur at the statewide level to ensure adequate and reliable funding for the management and recovery of Pennsylvania's fish and wildlife resources and their associated habitats.