

Western Governors' Wildlife Council

Workplan: July 2013 – December 2014

Vision Statement

The Wildlife Council works to identify key wildlife corridors and crucial wildlife habitats in the West, as well as to develop and coordinate policy options and tools for conserving those landscapes. With this aim, the Council strives to provide a public, user friendly online tool with consistent and region-wide information on crucial habitats for fish and wildlife, for all interested parties to use to assess landscapes and connectivity while better informing land use decisions.

Challenges

- The Governors have established a goal to launch publically available systems to display crucial wildlife habitat and corridor information in a consistent manner across the region by December 2013.
- Decision makers at all levels in the public and private sectors need visual tools for planning and evaluating a variety of land uses, while providing healthy and productive landscapes.
- States are developing Crucial Habitat Assessment Tools, or CHATs, to be used both within their states and in a West-wide CHAT.
- State technical experts need policy guidance to complete the West-wide CHAT by its launch date of December 2013.
- Public acceptance and widespread use of the state and West-wide CHATs will be aided by publicity from members of the Western Governors' Wildlife Council.
- The West-wide and state CHATs will need continued support through long-term funding and technical maintenance in order to sustain and further develop the tools.
- Governors need advice on, and analysis of, policy issues from time to time.
- The Western Governors will consider policy resolutions on the Endangered Species Act and Conserving Wildlife and Crucial Habitat in the West in June 2013. Both resolutions, if approved, will call for close state-federal partnerships in order to achieve conservation objectives.
- The 2009 MOU between the WGWC and the DOI, USDA, and DOE, which established a partnership with those federal agencies and the WGWC to encourage the federal use of state wildlife and CHAT information, expired in June 2013, necessitating other ways to ensure partnership with the federal government.

Objectives

- Advise Governors on policy options for conserving crucial wildlife habitats and key wildlife corridors.
- Improve analysis of landscape-scale energy, land use and transportation projects as well as land conservation and climate adaptation strategies by providing prioritized information through individual state-level tools and a regional-level Western Wildlife Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool (CHAT).
- Integrate customers and other stakeholders into the development, maintenance and roll-out of the CHAT at both the state and regional level.
- Seek widespread use of CHAT so that decision makers at all levels can rely on it to better inform planning, while providing healthy and productive landscapes.
- Ensure federal, state and local agencies consult CHAT and integrate its wildlife information early into land management, energy/transmission or transportation planning processes.
- Seek resources for internal and external state agency efforts to develop and maintain the CHAT and to support regional compatibility efforts.

Key Documents

- WGWC White Paper (newly revised 2013 version)
- Western Governors' policy resolution, "Conserving Wildlife and Crucial Habitat in the West" (passed June 2013)

Outcomes & Deliverables

I) Develop and launch the Western Governors' Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool (CHAT).

- A. Guide and direct state agency staff in their technical effort to provide public data layers for the CHAT on the following technical priorities:
 - a. Knit each state's final crucial habitat layers into a West-wide data map.
 - b. Facilitate interstate conversations to "edgematch" borders.
 - c. Manage contractor development of online interface for CHAT.
 - d. Develop web transition pages and appropriate messaging to link Western Governors' CHAT and state CHATs.
- B. Maintain relationships with stakeholders and federal groups, seeking their feedback on the CHAT and fostering a high level of transparency and user involvement.

- C. Provide public with information about the Western Governors' CHAT through speaking opportunities and written materials.
- D. Identify ways that users in energy, transportation, and land use planning can best make use of the Western Governors' CHAT.
- E. For those states with CHATs, continue development with integration of framework from Western Governors' CHAT as appropriate.

II) Advise the Western Governors on policies, mechanisms and agreements that conserve crucial wildlife habitats and key wildlife corridors.

- A. Provide policy support and advice to the Western Governors as needed.
- B. Support Governors' advocacy to encourage federal agencies to use state fish and wildlife data and analyses as principal sources to inform their land use, land planning and related natural resource decisions.
- C. Work closely with the WGWC Stakeholder Advisory Group to identify needs and exchange information regarding wildlife and habitat conservation, particularly in relation to the use and development of the Western Governors' CHAT.
- D. Provide analysis and support on options for the future of the relationship with the State/Federal Implementation Group (SFIG) established under the now-expired 2009 MOU between Western Governors and Secretaries of Agriculture, Energy, and the Interior Coordinate with other WGA affiliates to exchange information and advice on issues they address, including energy and water.
 - a. Provide policy support for the Governors' legislative approaches to encouraging federal use of state wildlife information, such as the testimony by WGA Executive Director to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, the Environment, and Related Agencies, which requested language from the committee regarding the use of state wildlife data including CHATs.
- E. Coordinate with other WGA affiliates and partner organizations to exchange information and advice on issues they address, including energy, water, and forest health.

III) Ensure long-term viability of the Western Governors' CHAT and state CHATs.

- A. Seek funding sources for continued maintenance and updating of the Western Governors' CHAT and state CHATs.
- B. Develop a maintenance strategy and data updating framework for the Western Governors' CHAT.
- C. Develop a plan for the long-term hosting of the Western Governors' CHAT.