



## Making Your SWAP RAWA-Ready

### Learning Series #7

**Date:** June 21, 2023

**Time:** 2:00pm-3:30pm (ET)

**Meeting Link:** <https://fishwildlife-org.zoom.us/j/81898696094?pwd=U1NaTE9NUlhvQjI2SDFCYkE3TmtNUT09>

**Meeting ID:** 818 9869 6094

**Passcode:** 612082

**One tap mobile:** +13017158592,,81898696094#,,,,\*612082# US (Washington DC)  
 +13092053325,,81898696094#,,,,\*612082# US

**Overview:** The Recovering America’s Wildlife Act ([S1149](#)), or RAWA, could be the most significant investment in fish and wildlife conservation in generations. If (when) it passes, the legislation will provide states with over \$1 billion annually to implement State Wildlife Action Plans and conserve species of greatest conservation need. Unlike the State & Tribal Wildlife Grants program, the bill includes provisions to fund plant conservation, conservation education, wildlife-dependent recreation, and law enforcement. As you approach revision of your SWAP, what approaches, challenges, and advice is available to help make your SWAP RAWA-ready?. This Learning Series will provide a forum for learning and discussion to help ensure your plan can take advantage of new dedicated funding.

**MEETING AGENDA**

Time (ET)	Topic	Speakers
2:00 PM	Welcome and Introductions	Mark Humpert, AFWA and Jason Goldberg, USFWS
2:05 PM	<p><u>Plenary</u></p> <p>What you should know about RAWA when revising your SWAP (10 min)</p> <p>USFWS perspective on making your SWAP RAWA-ready (10 min)</p> <p>Integrating the Virginia State Wildlife Viewing Plan &amp; Wildlife Corridor Plan SWAP (10 min)</p> <p>Examples of RAWA-ready conservation education and outdoor recreation projects in Texas (10 min)</p>	<p>Mark Humpert, AFWA</p> <p>Paul VanRyzin, USFWS</p> <p>Jeff Trollinger, Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources</p> <p>Shelly Plante, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department</p>

	How Minnesota incorporates engagement and wildlife viewing into the current and upcoming SWAP (10 min)	Cynthia Osmundson & Kristen Hall, Minnesota Dept of Natural Resources
	We did it! How Nevada incorporated conservation education and wildlife recreation into their revised SWAP (10 min)	Jen Newmark & Jess Brooks, Nevada Department of Wildlife
3:05 PM	Q&A and Panel Discussion	
3:30 PM	Wrap up and adjourn	

**What you should know about RAWA when revising your SWAP (Mark Humpert)**

- RAWA is an almost 50-year effort as part of SWAPs. SWAPs help prevent listings and support recovery. Your SGCNs likely cover the range of both.
- The current version of RAWA includes some ramp up. It would be approximately a 22-fold funding increase from what you currently get in State and Tribal Wildlife Funding.
- The 8 SWAP elements would be the same. There might be some things you consider adding. The legislation doesn't require changes, but education and plants can be added if your state likes.
- If RAWA does not pass in the next year or two, it's okay to have plants in your plan even if you can't spend State and Tribal Wildlife funding. Many states already include plants even though you technically can't spend money on plants.
- There has been a little confusion about the intent of RAWA and requirements. If you do conservation education, there has to be a tie to SGCNs. If you wanted to put public deer stands, but deer are not part of SGCN, you probably couldn't. If you put up a blind to view shorebirds that are SGCNs, and it's used part of the time for hunting, it's probably okay but you'd want to check with your regional WSFR contact to make sure dual purposes are okay.
- Unlike State and Tribal Wildlife Grants, any federal dollars not USDA or DOI **can** be used as a match. You might consider reaching out to NOAA, DOD, etc. for partnerships.
- Make sure the work you do is accountable, especially given the significant amount of funds that are now becoming available.
- Think big – RAWA is really changing the scale! Think about how to ensure your SWAP can address larger efforts.
- The need for RAWA is not questioned – we know we need to make these investments.

**USFWS perspective on making your SWAP RAWA-ready (Paul VanRyzin)**

- Updated guidance on adding plant SGCN to your Plan in a Minor Revision and Interim Guidance prepared in 2022 from USFWS is not available yet because RAWA is not final. We'll share it if passage becomes imminent. Eventually we would write a rule to codify the guidance but we would use the Interim Guidance until then.
- Education and recreation are eligible purposes. We can't share our Interim Guidance yet but the gist of it is that recreation and education projects must be consistent with the Statement of Purpose in the FY 2023 RAWA Senate bill language (second page of attached bill). In essence, that means

focusing on an SGCN in an approved Plan, a threatened or endangered species listed under the ESA, or a state-listed T&E species.

- Senate includes a plant supplement, calculated at 5% of each state's "base apportionment." \$188K to \$2.8M will be available depending on size of each state by FY 2027, when the full \$1.3 billion is set to be apportioned as per the Senate bill. (On p. 14 of the bill, Lines 11-23.) That language has not changed from previous bills.
- Bill does not require States or Territories to use the Plan supplement for plant SGCN conservation, but we hope you will.
- As a friendly reminder, while we wait for action on RAWA in Congress, States may use SWG Program funds for plant conservation but only if it improves habitat for an animal SGCN.
- To add plants:
  - You can start by reviewing 2017 Guidance on Wildlife Action Plan Review and Revision, and 2022 Policy Advisory: <https://fawiki.fws.gov/display/WSFRP/State+Wildlife+Grant+Program>
    - Plant Supplement language is in the attached 2023 Senate bill on p. 14, Lines 11-23. The Statement of Purpose (pertaining to education and recreation projects) is on p. 2, Lines 2-10.
  - 2017 Guidance Requirements
    - Must meet the definition of a Minor Revision – same "methods, criteria, or processes" documented in an approved Plan for selecting animal SGCN.
    - Must meet definition of Element 1 (Species)
      - Include low/declining plant populations
      - Be indicative of plant diversity and health
      - Include basic distribution and abundance.
  - 2022 Policy Advisory Requirements
    - Plans must "include plants among [a state's] SGCN."
    - Plans must include at least some of the SGCN plants in the "conservation planning and habitat prioritization efforts of" the Plan.
    - Information required for at least some portion of your identified plant SGCN. There is no minimum number or percentage of all your plant SGCN for which you must provide "conservation planning" or "habitat prioritization" information. Some states have provided this information for only 6-12 plant SGCN, so a small subset is fine.
    - Must include plant SGCN info addressing at least one of Elements 2-5.
  - Process Overview
    - State must notify WSFR Regional Office with a letter of intent to define anticipated changes, offer justification (recommend including references with page numbers or links to the methods, criteria, or processes for selecting animal SGCN in your approved Plan), provide an expected timeframe, and request a "provisional determination" of eligibility for 5% Plant Supplement. This notification can be initiated by a staff-level biologist or program manager (if consistent with your agency policy), be emailed to the WFR Regional SWG program manager(s), and need not be on letterhead or be signed by a state director or anyone else. If you prefer to formalize the intent letter by obtaining signatures, mailing the paper letter, etc. we will certainly accept it but it is not required.

- WSFR Regional Office will acknowledge and document your letter of intent. The Regional Office may request additional information at this stage.
- State completes the Minor Revision and submits all materials to the WSFR Regional Office. Include a request for approval of the Minor Revision (following 2017 Guidance requirements) and for a provisional determination of eligibility for the 5% Plant Supplement as per the RAWA bill language criteria (2022 Policy Advisory).
- WSFR Regional Office will respond, acknowledging receipt and/or requesting more information. Response will include approval of Minor Revision. If requested, and based on a Region's procedure, the response may include a provisional determination that the revised Plan meets eligibility requirements for the 5% Plant Supplement as per the FY 2023 Senate bill. [This portion of the response will include a caveat that the determination is not final and cannot be final until RAWA is enacted in law and WSFR can analyze the language for any changes in the 5% Plant Supplement criteria.]
- State must receive determination of eligibility for the 5% Plan Supplement at least three weeks prior to final RAWA apportionment.
- This shouldn't be a significant time commitment to add plant SGCN in a Minor Revision, but USFWS wants to make sure it's in compliance with RAWA, as well as the 2017 Guidance.
- If Plant Supplement language changes, USFWS will follow-up and revise/share the updated Policy Advisory. The WSFR Regional Office will define and request any additional information if there are changes in the language resulting in additional eligibility requirements. [WSFR doesn't necessarily see this as likely, since the Plant Supplement language has remained unchanged since 2022.]
- Best practices
  - Reach out to WSFR Regional Office early. Your SWG Program manager(s) are your best first contacts for any type of Plan revision (Minor, Major, Comprehensive).
  - Provide sufficient justification in submitted Minor Revision.
  - Publish the new plant SGCN info as an appendix (or in any other format as preferred by the state), so the public has access to it.

#### **Integrating the Virginia State Wildlife Viewing Plan & Wildlife Corridor Plan SWAP (Jeff Trollinger)**

- We are using both the Viewing Plan and Wildlife Corridor Plans. In 2005, we had an appendix on conservation education and integrated Watchable Wildlife into our efforts. In 2015, we didn't do as much due to staffing. (Jeff can share the 2005 text if interested.)
- Our current Viewing Plan has several goals.
  - Increase viewing opportunities by the public – seeks to increase underrepresented groups, families, etc. with viewing opportunities for SGCNs.
  - Promoting wildlife conservation through wildlife viewing, including volunteer engagement (citizen science).
- The two plans tie well together to provide for both conservation education and SWAPs.

- Wildlife Corridor Action Plan – Does not deal specifically with education but has a lot of related messaging.
- Links
  - VA Wildlife Viewing Plan: <https://dwr.virginia.gov/wildlife-watching/wildlife-viewing-plan>
  - Wildlife Corridor Action Plan: <https://dwr.virginia.gov/wildlife/corridors/>

### **Examples of RAWA-ready conservation education and outdoor recreation projects in Texas (Shelly Plante)**

- We have some existing wildlife viewing programs we can tap, such as Great Texas Wildlife Trail, that could do a lot more if we could increase staff capacity allowing us to reach more people and connect them to nature. Within the Wildlife Trails program we have a project with Texas Master Naturalist volunteers that could be matched with funding and is already used to record (in iNaturalist) and identify SGCNs. Great Texas Birding Classic helps identify SGCNs and contributes to citizen science annually, but it doesn't have a full time coordinator – we could do bigger reach and generate better data, among other benefits. These programs could easily scale allowing us to gather more data on SGCNs, connect more people to nature, and increase our reach within the state to wildlife viewers. We'd also like to do more work with pollinators and our Texas Pollinator BioBlitz (hold it more than once a year, ID more SGCNs, reach more people). And more! With staffing and funding, we could make all of these programs and others better.
- On education side, Project WILD Coordinator is a single person for the entire state. That program could grow and reach more youth, teachers, and schools, making connections between students and wildlife (including SGCNs). Our Texas Aquatic Science and the Exploring Water and Watersheds programs could be expanded to their full potential with RAWA funding, adding specific content related to Texas aquatic SGCNs and their habitats, expanding the reach and effectiveness of these programs.
- We have ideas for projects outside of existing work, but we want to start small with what we already have and grow from there.
- We don't have funding to conduct surveys and track in-depth program metrics, but we'd like to do more of that – RAWA funding would open up possibilities for this much-needed piece of each program/project.

### **How Minnesota incorporates engagement and wildlife viewing into the current and upcoming SWAP (Cynthia Osmundson & Kristen Hall)**

- 2015 Goal is to enhance opportunities to enjoy SGCN and other wildlife and to participate in conservation.
  - Increase number and diversity of people engaged in wildlife conservation and SGCNs.
- We're working on projects now that are scalable if RAWA comes through.
  - Building Community Science Program.
  - Kicking off Bird by Bird.
  - Supporting Increasing Diversity in Environmental Careers internship.
  - And more!

- We have developed community science work in the state. It gives us a chance to work with the public in different ways. We work with existing efforts such as e-bird. We tout that science is for everyone right outside your backdoor!
- Bird by Bird is another program from Idaho we've tailored to MN.
  - Birds are a gateway to introducing students to nature. Not everyone realizes birds are part of the outdoor community. We are able to work in areas where people may not have significant opportunities otherwise.
  - We offer outdoor leadership training, helping people realize there are different aspects of working in this field.
  - Community engagement is also important – not just within schools.
- IDEC Internships – helps to increase STEM diversity in environmental and natural resource careers.
- We do some of this with our existing SWAP because we have diversified funding but we'd like to do more of it.
- In MN, we have a variety of funding mechanisms that we can use. There's a "loon line" in state taxes that allows taxpayers to contribute funds that gives us funding, as well as license plates.
- MN invested in a State level project on relevancy from the Virginia Tech national effort in order to better understand our supporters and to gain insights on how to reach new allies
- As part of the work with Virginia Tech we conducted listening sessions with BIPOC focus groups, results will be compiled this spring.

**We did it! How Nevada incorporated conservation education and wildlife recreation into their revised SWAP (Jen Newmark & Jess Brooks)**

- Citizen science and Wildlife Viewing functioned as metrics for demonstrating importance of education
- Building relevancy meant addressing Nevada's growing population
- Conservation educators worked with Wildlife Diversity staff to develop **a three-point process**:
  1. Expand wildlife education programming
  2. Create state-wide wildlife viewing program
  3. Implement a multi-media approach

**Conservation Objectives:**

1. K-12 Wildlife Education Programs
2. Interpretive Centers
3. Urban Wildlife and Living with Wildlife Programs
4. Wildlife Viewing and Nature Tourism.

**Key SWAP Strategies:**

Identified conservation strategies that directly tied to habitat threats and conservation needs of sensitive species.

Conservation efforts were strengthened by increasing public buy-in through: Wildlife Viewing, Citizen Science, and Education within the following topics:

1. Habitat loss and destruction
2. Climate Change
3. Aquatic Invasive Species
4. Sensitive Species

*Goals:*

1. Develop year-round interpretive centers with public wildlife education programs
2. Provide outreach in public wildlife education in all locations
3. Develop and provide wildlife viewing/nature tours such as the Nevada Wildlife Discovery Trail

**New Positions:**

Outdoor Connection Coordinator

Wildlife Diversity Staff Specialist

Progress:

The 2022 SWAP is not yet available to the public. Completed SWAP has brought a newfound sense of ambition and determination.

**Panel Discussion Trigger Questions**

- What are the pros and cons of addressing plants, conservation education, wildlife recreation, and/or law enforcement in your SWAP revision?
- What resources do I need so my SWAP can be RAWA-ready?

**Panel Discussion**

Pros and Cons:

Having a SWAP offers only pros by incorporating all aspects of conservation work. Even if the funding is uncertain, it's important to have a plan.

We recognize the value education and recreation projects. Identifying SGCN or TNE related projects is beneficial especially projects consistent with the 2023 Senate Bill statement of purpose will be eligible under RAWA.

Originally, state-wide wildlife action plans were supposed to be bigger in scope than any single funding source. So there are no downsides to creating a detailed SWAP revision that incorporates a wide range of needs.

Resources needed to be RAWA-ready:

23 states have language with language compliant with RAWA so far

SGCS Database and other SWAP working groups offer resources that can help reach RAWA-ready status

**Parting Comments:**

- A lot of wildlife viewing programs aren’t eligible for funding currently, so that means our state funds in these programs aren’t currently used as match for federal grants in most cases. That means we have funds available to be used as RAWA match for outdoor recreation programs right now. We can diversify how we receive funding via relying on donations, new wildlife viewing funding sources (conservation license plates, lottery tickets, check-offs, etc.) and volunteer public support (volunteer hours on outdoor recreation and conservation ed projects).
- Reference: Voluntary SWAP / Landscape guidance: [https://www.fishwildlife.org/application/files/6416/3240/1090/SWAPLandscapeConservationReport\\_2021-FINAL.pdf](https://www.fishwildlife.org/application/files/6416/3240/1090/SWAPLandscapeConservationReport_2021-FINAL.pdf)
- WSFR Best Practices: Documentation of Third-Party In-Kind Contributions:
  - <https://fawiki.fws.gov/display/WSFR/Third-party+In-kind+Contributions?preview=%2F12976336%2F195330062%2FBest+Practices+-+Documentation+of+In-Kind+Match+-+Volunteer+Time.docx>
  - <https://fawiki.fws.gov/display/WSFR/Third-party+In-kind+Contributions>.

**Past & Future SWAP Learning Series (Tentative Schedule)**

Date*	Topic (w/Recording Link)	Recording Password	Link to Notes
Wednesday, November 16, 2022	<a href="#">#1 Engaging Tribes and Indigenous People in State Wildlife Action Plans</a>	0T?41Gz.	<a href="#">SWAP &amp; Tribal Engagement Notes</a>
Wednesday, December 14, 2022	<a href="#">#2 SWAPs and Climate Adaptation Guidance</a>	XU.=69*j	<a href="#">SWAP &amp; Climate Adaptation Notes</a>
Wednesday, January 18, 2023	<a href="#">#3 State Wildlife Action Plans and Renewable Energy</a>	=7NSsqQT	<a href="#">SWAP &amp; Renewable Energy Notes</a>
Wednesday, March 15, 2023	<a href="#">#4 Interactive data and tools for SWAP planning and implementation</a>	+6@f9jQW	<a href="#">SWAP &amp; NatureServe Notes</a>
Wednesday, April 19, 2023	<a href="#">#5 Engaging Diverse Partners &amp; Making your SWAP More Relevant</a>	\$p?=lg95	<a href="#">SWAP &amp; Engaging Diverse Partners Notes</a>
Wednesday, May 17, 2023	<a href="#">#6 Using the SWAP &amp; Landscape Conservation Framework for</a>	B=Jg^@8=	<a href="#">SWAP &amp; Landscape Conservation</a>



	<a href="#">Interjurisdictional Landscape Conservation</a>		
Wednesday, June 21, 2023	<a href="#">#7 Making Your SWAP RAWA-Ready</a>	FnJane%1	Making SWAPs RAWA-Ready
Wednesday, July 19, 2023	#8 Incorporating corridors into your SWAP		
Wednesday, August 16, 2023	<i>No SWAP Learning Series- Enjoy the Summer</i>		
Wednesday, September 20, 2023	# 9 Connecting federal planning efforts into SWAP (NWRS, USFS, BLM)		
October 18, 2023	#10 Tentative Topic-Bat Conservation Guidance		
November 15, 2023	#11 Incorporating Fish & Wildlife Health and One Health into your SWAP		
December 13 <sup>th</sup> , 2023 (2 <sup>nd</sup> Wed of Dec.)	#12 Tentative Topic-2023 Round-up on Lessons Learned		
* Note all SWAP Learning Series sessions will be held from 2:00pm-3:30pm ET unless otherwise indicated.			

Commented [GJ1]: Mark to add when notes are finalized.