



State Wildlife Action Plans & Wildlife Corridors

Learning Series #8

Date: July 19, 2023

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

Meeting Link: [https://fishwildlife-
org.zoom.us/j/86186876959?pwd=aXA4Vm4vRWRmRk90VGcrQ0RoQkhIUT09](https://fishwildlife-org.zoom.us/j/86186876959?pwd=aXA4Vm4vRWRmRk90VGcrQ0RoQkhIUT09)

Meeting ID: 861 8687 6959

Passcode: 002978

One tap mobile: +13017158592,,86186876959#,,, *002978# US (Washington DC)

+13092053325,,86186876959#,,, *002978# US

Overview: Biodiversity is critical for human health, economies, and livelihoods. Connectivity, the degree to which the landscape facilitates or impedes movement among resource patches is key to addressing major threats to biodiversity. Connectivity involves structural connectivity, the physical relationship between patches of habitat, and functional connectivity, which is the degree to which landscapes facilitate or impede the movement of organisms and processes. Though sometimes used synonymously with connectivity, a corridor refers to a distinct component of the landscape that provides connectivity. As you approach your SWAP revision, what approaches, challenges, and advice can help your SWAP include corridors? This Learning Series will discuss several perspectives of connectivity and corridors on the landscape and highlight issues SWAP managers might consider in their plans.

MEETING AGENDA

Time (ET)	Topic	Speakers
2:00 PM	Welcome and Introductions	Mark Humpert, AFWA and Jason Goldberg, USFWS
2:05 PM	<u>Plenary</u> Integrating Connectivity into SWAPs: Threats, Actions, and Best Practices-Zack Wurtzebach, Corridors and Crossings Program Director, Center for Large Landscape Conservation (15 min) <u>White House Guidance for Federal Departments and Agencies on Ecological Connectivity and Wildlife Corridors</u> : Overview with highlights on potential state benefits-Jill Cohen, Science Coordinator, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (12 min) Transportation corridors and wildlife movement & migration considerations in SWAPs-Rita Dixon, State Wildlife Action Plan Coordinator, Idaho Department of Fish & Game (10 min)	
2:55 PM	Breakout Groups	
3:25 PM	Reconvene	
3:30 PM	Wrap up and adjourn	

--	--	--

Zach Wurtzebach

- Overview of upcoming report analysis in first week of August. We reviewed SWAPs to identify best practices and observations for SWAPs.
- Connectivity is having a moment. We're seeing more and examples of legislation and executive policy where it's being funded and required in different planning exercises. This is a good time to be considering connectivity.
- We characterized connectivity actions in all 50 SWAPs from the 2015 revisions and identified good examples for practitioners. We then identified best practices and key considerations for developing connectivity actions.
- We reviewed connectivity actions based on type of action, type of species, threat.
- Most actions focused on land/water management and research & monitoring.
- Birds and fish were most dominant taxa. Some regional differences
- Top threats included natural systems modification such as dams, transportation, and residential & commercial.
- We were able to identify other important threats for planning purposes that SWAP planners should consider moving forwards.
 - Urban development: Concern about expansion to areas where species are moving. Also important to maintain existing connectivity where it already exists in urban areas. There is an important opportunity to link to cobenefits for people
 - Energy and Mining: We anticipate more attention in upcoming SWAPs on this issue given increase in renewables development. More tools are coming online for siting.
 - Agriculture and Aquaculture: There is increased interest in integrating connectivity into Farm Bill programs, so this is another one to watch.
- Key Considerations and Best Practices
 - Be specific! Identify discrete and sequential actions. What scale is most relevant, what are you taking action for? Who are your partners? SWAPs are blueprints, so be specific.
 - Think "sectorally." Specific threats are usually associated with threats in specific sectors.
 - Map it. Get it online, allow for communication between partners, the public, and between your own staff.
 - Engage partners at relevant scales. Allows you to get to specific actions.
 - Prioritize communication.
 - Invest in internal capacity. Can help promote leveraging partnerships and funding
- Funding opportunities exist. Connectivity is being required more and more in grant applications. Opportunities such as America the Beautiful.
- More information is available at <https://largelandscapes.org/resources/>

Jill Cohen

- Recent guidance to Federal agencies on how to incorporate connectivity.
- Council on Environmental Quality helps promote interagency coordination.
- Basics
 - Guidance developed through an interagency team with FWS, other DOI bureaus, NOAA, etc.
 - Signed in March 2023. Guidance sets intent for policies and practices to support ecological connectivity.

- Connectivity is the degree to which landscapes, waterscapes, and seascapes allow species to move freely and ecological processes to function unimpeded. Corridors are distinct component.
 - Includes terrestrial, marine, freshwater, and airspaces.
- Coordination – Guidance is to provide clarity and consistency to help Federal agencies better coordinate with each other and with stakeholders and partners.
- Where to incorporate connectivity
 - Planning and decision-making
 - Connectivity and corridors should factor into high-level planning and decision-making.
 - Connectivity should be considered in grant eligibility
 - Mitigation
 - Engaging with local communities but also “landscape scale.”
 - Science and Data
 - Use best available science and data, including indigenous knowledge.
 - Encourages data sharing and making data public / accessible.
 - Collaboration and coordination
 - Support strategic landscape-scale collaborations and partnerships.
 - Don’t silo!
- How could improved Federal coordination benefit SWAPs?
 - Factored into Federal planning and decisions.
 - Improved data quality and sharing
 - Work through Regional partnerships
 - Improved overall consistency and coordination.
- For those interested in viewing the CEQ Guidance memo, you can find it here:
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/230318-Corridors-connectivity-guidance-memo-final-draft-formatted.pdf>.
- Discussion
 - Is indigenous knowledge defined in the guidance?
 - Here is the definition of indigenous knowledge from the CEQ memo: "In this guidance, the terminology “science and data” is inclusive of Indigenous Knowledge, which is a body of observations, oral and written knowledge, innovations, practices, and beliefs developed by Tribes and Indigenous Peoples through interaction and experience with the environment. White House Office of Science and Technology Policy and White House Council on Environmental Quality. (2022). Guidance for Federal Departments and Agencies on Indigenous Knowledge. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/OSTP-CEQ-IK-Guidance.pdf>

Rita Dixon

- Transportation corridors and wildlife movement and migration considerations
- WAFWA is developing a factsheet on corridors. We typically think of connectivity and corridors in various ways – stepping stones, linkages, networks, etc. The use of one term over another depends on context, but we’re starting to hear corridors more often. Idaho Fish and Game tends to use the term “routes” instead of corridors.
- ID had a SWAP enhancement grant to look at connectivity. Thinking about connectivity in a statewide context can be variable.
- We developed 12 challenge categories, ranging from residential and commercial development to insufficient species and conservation information. We can address connectivity in many of them.

- Transportation and Service corridors
 - We looked at overarching effects of the various challenges. For example, transportation and service corridors affects big-game movement (fences, etc.).
- For each challenge category, we identified voluntary actions to address them. For example, our latest SWAP revision involves reconnecting seasonal ranges where transportation systems have caused disruptions.
- Connectivity is also important in aquatic habitats. Examples include sustainable water management where quantity and quality of water are impeded. Work might include addressing fish passage.
- Success story – Northern Rocky Mountain Fisher
 - Fisher movement has been an issue in the past. We've taken steps to better understand their habitat needs through eDNA and other activities.
- Aerosphere
 - Animals move through the airspace – we need to think about connectivity in this arena as much as the others.
 - For example, collisions with wind turbines can pose a problem for some species
- <https://idfg.idaho.gov/swap> - latest SWAP is under review.

Breakout Groups Discussion Trigger Questions

- How are you approaching wildlife corridors in your State Wildlife Action Plan?
- What tools, resources, and help do you need to address wildlife corridors in your State Wildlife Action Plan?

References from Group Discussion

- Idaho also has a roadkill database at <https://idfg.idaho.gov/species/roadkill>
- Washington Wildlife Habitat Connectivity Working Group formed in 2007 <https://wacconnected.org/about-the-working-group/> and subsets of those original agency participants in regional connectivity working groups (Columbia Basin and Arid Lands Initiative; western Washington forests connectivity between the Cascades and Olympic Peninsula) not just for SGCN or SWAP-related a bit more info from one of WA's more active conservation groups: <https://conservationnw.org/new-science-exhibits-need-for-wildlife-crossing-structures-in-southwest-washington/>

Breakout Group #1

- Dylan (GA) - We're working on defining corridors/routes. We're working to make them more consistent and improve them. We don't have particular animals in mind.
 - Zach – There are basic datasets that can help you examine certain species. You can also make choices about how defined you need your boundaries to be.
- Jeff (VA) has completed Corridors plan – we know where some of our major impediments are. We'll be using it for our SWAP. It's on our website.
 - Birds comprise our major corridors. We are looking at aerial barriers, especially with wind becoming more important.

Breakout Group #2

- New Jersey has been making progress in identifying barriers.
- Could we come up with a resource to identify States that have incorporated corridors into their SWAPs? (This is part of the report that Center for Large Landscape Conservation is developing.)
- New Jersey has a program, [Connecting Habitats Across New Jersey](#) (CHANJ) that produces connectivity maps and hotspots with core habitats. NJ will bring this information into their SWAP, it's integrated with COA's yet. Bringing this data into SWAP through an online integrated map would

eliminate the need for multiple mapping tools. Looking into integrating with other NE states. Important for species like bobcats. Cross state integration may be an action in NJ's revised SWAP. NJ has a system to report roadkills which can help with corridor planning. The CHANJ team is working with DOT to incorporate roadkill data into their planning. Wildlife crossings require lots of time and money, but NJ has an in with the DOT. CHANJ provides mapping and guidance. There is no mandate to protect corridors in NJ. DOT should be interested in mapping of trouble spots. SD has done some work on Big Game corridors but this work is separate from work on SGCN. Corridors not addressed much in current SWAP. SD does not have corridor legislation. A list of states that have incorporated corridors into their SWAP would be useful. BIL is a source of funding for corridor work.

Breakout Group #3

- GA is looking to connect conservation lands, mostly based on known species occurrence data. Different ways of thinking about this issue.

Breakout Group #4

- We discussed how to link to priorities from other partner. We discussed the Washington model – they have a habitat connectivity coordinator.
- We're working to better incorporate GIS staff.

Links to Video and Notes from Past SWAP Learning Series and Tentative Future Topics

Date*	Topic (w/Recording Link)	Recording Password	Link to Notes
Wednesday, November 16, 2022	#1 Engaging Tribes and Indigenous People in State Wildlife Action Plans	0T?41Gz.	SWAP & Tribal Engagement Notes
Wednesday, December 14, 2022	#2 SWAPs and Climate Adaptation Guidance	XU.=69*j	SWAP & Climate Adaptation Notes
Wednesday, January 18, 2023	#3 State Wildlife Action Plans and Renewable Energy	=7NSqgQT	SWAP & Renewable Energy Notes
Wednesday, March 15, 2023	#4 Interactive data and tools for SWAP planning and implementation	+6@f9jQW	SWAP & NatureServe Notes
Wednesday, April 19, 2023	#5 Engaging Diverse Partners & Making your SWAP More Relevant	\$p?=lg95	SWAP & Engaging Diverse Partners Notes
Wednesday, May 17, 2023	#6 Using the SWAP & Landscape Conservation Framework for Interjurisdictional Landscape Conservation	B=jg^@8=	SWAP & Landscape Conservation
Wednesday, June 21, 2023	#7 Making Your SWAP RAWA-Ready	FnJane%1	Making SWAP RAWA-Ready
Wednesday, July 19, 2023	#8 Incorporating corridors into your SWAP	Zr#+^rla	

Commented [GJ1]: Mark to add link.

Wednesday, August 16, 2023	<i>No SWAP Learning Series- Enjoy the Summer Note: If there interest we may have a roundtable discussion</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 th , 2023 (2 nd 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.