

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Background

The South Dakota Wildlife Action Plan (SDWAP) uses a science-based approach to assess the health of South Dakota's fish, wildlife, plants, and associated habitats; evaluate the problems they face; and outline actions to help conserve them for the long term. This plan encourages voluntary partnerships among governmental entities, Native American tribes, organizations, and private citizens to help prevent fish and wildlife from becoming endangered and to provide for the needs of the full array of fish and wildlife and habitat diversity for the future sustained enjoyment and use by South Dakota's residents and visitors. The Plan provides a strategic framework to allow cooperators to identify and implement priorities at various scales, whether linked to habitats or fish, wildlife, or plant species.



This document is a revision of a previous SDWAP, finalized in 2014 and approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 2015. State Wildlife Action Plans maintain state eligibility for certain federal funding sources and present collaborative opportunities within the state and across political boundaries to improve the status of species and habitats. The revision process is an opportunity to review new data and incorporate emerging conservation challenges. In general, South Dakota's plan presents information separately for aquatic, terrestrial, and riparian-wetland

ecosystems. Our planning approach applies a coarse-fine/filter method to consider major habitat changes since European settlement and associated loss or modification of important natural disturbance regimes since then. This approach is expected to accommodate the needs of the majority of species. The array and distribution of ecosystems across South Dakota shaped and sustained the region's biological diversity, and most fish, wildlife, and plant species in the state today resulted from historical ecosystems on the Great Plains. This coarse filter approach is supplemented by a fine filter component that addresses species and habitats needing additional management to meet their conservation challenges.

The 2025 Revision identifies 245 plant and animal SGCNs and describes their conservation challenges and actions needed to address those challenges. We used standardized classification systems to describe threats and actions to allow better collaboration within species' ranges and across state boundaries. We revised conservation opportunity areas (COAs) for terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems to continue encouraging collaboration among conservation partners. We present a new habitat classification description to supplement the Major Land Resource Areas (MLRA) classification, although the MLRA system maintains its relevance to landowners and rangeland and grassland experts. We report on environmental attitudes of the public and critical partners regarding the previous plan's relevance and ways to improve it. We expanded consideration of the importance of environmental education and wildlife-associated recreation to hopefully expand activities with new funding opportunities.