Idaho Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS)

DRAFT IDAHO CWCS

Background Information:

Background

Photo © Rita Dixon

With over 1,000 animal species on the federal Threatened and Endangered Species list, our nation clearly needs a robust program to address problems early on to avoid costly, intensive measures for the recovery of these species. The number of listed species has doubled in the last 10 years with many more in the pipeline. Declines to species populations and their habitats will continue in the future unless resources are provided for proactive conservation efforts. Once a species is listed, the amount of federal dollars needed to protect or restore these species is far greater than would have been required to prevent their decline in the first place. Annual federal expenditures for the recovery of listed species has increased by more than six fold over the past 10 years to an expenditure level of over $300 million (without including land acquisition or state listed species).

State wildlife agencies are the backbone of our nation's wildlife conservation. United States laws and policies place the primary responsibility for implementing wildlife management programs in the hands of the 50 states, but effective management and conservation depends upon a partnership with Congress to provide consistent and adequate funding to the states. For decades, federal funding to the states in the form of excise taxes on arms and ammunition (Pittman-Robertson Federal Aid to Wildlife Restoration Act of 1937) and fishing equipment (Dingell-Johnson Federal Aid to State Fisheries Act of 1950 and Wallop-Breaux Act of 1984), has focused primarily on-and has been largely responsible for-enormously successful programs that ensure the conservation and sustainable use of important wildlife species hunted or fished by the millions of sportsmen and women across America. There has, however, been a serious gap in both state and federal funding for the many species of fish and wildlife not addressed by hunting and fishing license fees and excise taxes.

In 1980, Congress passed the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act designed to assist the states in conserving the nation's "nongame" species. Unfortunately, Congress never appropriated funds for this program. More recently funds have become available through new programs that were created as a result of the effort and dedication of the Teaming with Wildlife (TWW) coalition led by groups such as: American Birding Association, International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, National Audubon Society, National Wildlife Federation, National Wild Turkey Federation, The Wildlife Society, and the Wildlife Management Institute. These new federal funds continue the precedent of cooperation between the federal government and the states for managing and conserving wildlife species set by the Pittman-Robertson Act and the Dingell-Johnson/Wallop-Breaux Acts.

In fiscal year (FY) 2001, the federal government provided the first substantial funding for state nongame wildlife conservation and wildlife-related recreation and education. As part of the Commerce, Justice, and State (CJS) Department's appropriations, a new program, the Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program (WCRP), distributed $50 million among the 50 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Territories, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico through a sub-account of the Wildlife Restoration Fund (Pittman-Robertson) (Table 1). Funds were distributed through a formula based upon one-third land area and two-thirds population size, and required a 25% non-federal match for conservation planning projects and a 50% match for implementation projects. The WCRP program closely followed the language TWW developed in Title III of the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA). In

addition, $25 million was made available to states in the State Wildlife Grants (SWG) competitive grants program through the Department of Interior appropriations.

As part of the FY 2002 - 2004 Interior appropriations bills, varying levels of annual funding were allocated to the SWG program, and additional funds were earmarked for Indian tribes to conserve wildlife on their lands (Table 1). SWG funding is intended for species with the greatest conservation need, as determined by the states. Unlike the WCRP, SWG funds are not available for conservation education and wildlife recreation, and all projects require a 50% non-federal match.

Table 1. Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program (WCRP) and State Wildlife Grant (SWG) appropriations for federal fiscal years 2001 - 2004.

Federal Funds	State Appropriations	Tribal Appropriations	Total Appropriations
WCRP FY01	$50 million(a)		$50 million
SWG FY01	$25 million(b)		$25 million
SWG FY02	$80 million(a)	$5 million(b)	$85 million
SWG FY03	$60 million(a)	$5 million(b)	$65 million
SWG FY04	$64 million(a)	$6 million(b)	$70 million

(a) Funds appropriated based upon a formula of 1/3 land area and 2/3 population size.
(b) Funds appropriated based upon a competitive grants process.

The SWG program is new federal funding to help states implement proactive species conservation and hopefully preclude species from becoming listed as threatened or endangered. This is the first time the federal government has provided substantial funding to the states to address species endangerment and habitat conservation in a proactive manner rather than just having the states participate in recovery activities for listed species under Section 6 of the Endangered Species Act. The SWG program provides an opportunity to turn this trend around, to help reduce the need for listing species, and to reduce the need for costly species recovery efforts. The SWG program provides the funding for States to realize the long-term goal and commitment to prevent species from becoming endangered. However, the challenge faced by many states, including Idaho, is to provide the 50% required non-federal match. At the current level of SWG funding, the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) is able to provide the required match with funds from wildlife license plate sales, the income tax check-off for the nongame program, and a third-party grants program wherein applicants for SWG grant funds provide the required non-federal match. No hunting and fishing license/tag funds are used as match for SWG as these IDFG funds are used to provide the required 25% match for the Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson federal assistance programs for sport fish and wildlife.

Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy

Photo © Luana McCauley

All states and territories that accept SWG monies must agree to produce a Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS) by 1 October 2005. These strategies must identify and be focused on the "species in greatest need of conservation," yet address the "full array of wildlife" and wildlife-related issues.

The CWCS provides an opportunity for IDFG to provide effective and visionary leadership in wildlife conservation. The CWCS can identify the measures that will be used, the results achieved, and the threats and needs that remain with regard to wildlife and wildlife habitat. It is also an opportunity to address broader issues and programs, including environmental and wildlife-related education, outdoor recreation, and wildlife-related law enforcement. These other areas can constrain, or enhance, wildlife conservation efforts, and funding and public support for wildlife conservation can be increased, or at least stretched, by involving partners that share those interests.

Required Elements of the CWCS

Congress has provided the States and Territories with a list of 8 required elements that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) must use as criteria to evaluate whether a state's CWCS meets the letter and spirit of the law. These required elements are:

1. Information on the distribution and abundance of wildlife species that are indicative of the diversity and health of the State's wildlife;
2. Descriptions of locations and relative condition of key habitats and community types essential to conservation of species identified in (1);
3. Descriptions of problems that may adversely affect species and habitats identified in (1) and (2), respectively;
4. Descriptions of conservation actions determined to be necessary to conserve the identified species and habitats and priorities for implementing such actions;
5. Proposed plans for monitoring species identified in (1) and their habitats (2), for monitoring the effectiveness of the conservation actions proposed in (4), and for adapting these conservation actions to respond appropriately to new information or changing conditions;
6. Descriptions of procedures to review the Strategy at intervals not to exceed 10 years;
7. Plans for coordinating the development, implementation, review, and revision of the Strategy with federal, state, and local agencies and Indian tribes that manage significant land and water areas within the State or administer programs that significantly affect the conservation of identified species and habitats; and
8. Broad public participation process in developing and implementing these Strategies.

Planning Process and Partnerships

1. Involve multiple staff levels within each agency, and broad public-private partnerships, to develop and implement the CWCS.
2. Involve partners that have the authorities necessary to ensure that the CWCS addresses the full range of issues at hand.
3. Build capacity for cooperative engagement among all partners in the effort, and make sure that it is productive.
4. Share responsibility and credit for planning and implementation among all partners.
5. Focus on efficiency and effectiveness.
6. Ensure that the planning processes and the resultant CWCS are dynamic.
7. Communicate effectively with stakeholders, other partners, and the public, early and often.
8. The planning processes, and the decisions made during planning, should be obvious to those who read and use the CWCS, and repeatable.

Focus and Scope

1. Based on "best science," "best management practices," and "adaptive management," with measurable goals, objectives, strategies, approaches, and activities that are complete, realistic, feasible, logical, and achievable.

2. Address the broad range of wildlife and associated habitats, with appropriate priority placed on those species of greatest conservation need.

3. Integrate and address wildlife-related issues statewide, across jurisdictions and interests, and coordinate with parallel efforts in other states and countries.

4. Combine landscape/ecosystem/habitat-based approaches and smaller-scale approaches for planning and implementation.

5. Make the CWCS an effective, long-lasting blueprint for conservation that provides a broad vision and priorities, so a broad array of organizations, including other government agencies and NGOs, can help realize the vision.

Format and Content

1. Make the CWCS readable, understandable, and useful, with well-defined issues, short and long-term goals and objectives, strategies, and realistic measures of performance that enable IDFG and their partners to demonstrate accountability.

2. Make full and effective use of relevant existing information.

3. Identify knowledge gaps, as well as areas of knowledge, to help focus future efforts to improve understanding and planning.

4. Make the CWCS spatially explicit, to the extent feasible and appropriate, so all partners can use it effectively.

5. Use "threats analyses," "risk and stressor assessments," and other techniques to help set priorities for goals, objectives, strategies, and activities.

6. In addition to wildlife, address factors that can have substantial impact on wildlife conservation.

7. Include a comprehensive glossary, so partners and the public have a shared and common understanding of key terms used in the CWCS.

8. Develop an updateable information system to monitor CWCS implementation and the status and trends of wildlife and habitat.

9. Consider wildlife conservation-related education and wildlife-associated recreation as tools that can help accomplish conservation goals.

Completion, Outcomes, and Availability

1. Provide annual written progress updates on the planning effort and progress to the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' (IAFWA) Teaming With Wildlife Committee each September, in addition to annual performance reports that must be submitted to the FWS pursuant to Federal Aid guidelines.

2. Ensure that the CWCS clearly and definitively meets State obligations to Congress under the WCRP and SWG legislation, and to the FWS with regard to Federal Aid administration.

3. Provide sufficient documentation in or with the CWCS to facilitate public understanding of the decisions that are made, how and why they were made.

4. Make the CWCS a driving force in guiding activities under diverse wildlife and habitat conservation initiatives, and usable for helping to inform land-use decision-making.

5. Make the CWCS readily available to the public in a variety of media.

6. Provide a mechanism for reporting accomplishments and tracking progress so local partners are aware of both.

7. Ensure that the CWCS can be implemented to preserve our Nation's wildlife heritage.

Idaho's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy questions and answers

Q1. What must be contained within Idaho's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy, and is there a universal format to ease interstate collaboration and utility?

A. Idaho's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy must include the following items:

1. Information on the distribution and abundance of species of wildlife (defined in Q4), including low and declining populations as the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) deems appropriate, that are indicative of the diversity and health of the Idaho's wildlife;

2. Descriptions of locations and relative condition of key habitats and community types essential to conservation of species identified in (1);

3. Descriptions of problems that may adversely affect species identified in (1) or their habitats, and priority research and survey efforts needed to identify factors that may assist in restoration and improved conservation of these species and habitats;

4. Descriptions of conservation actions determined to be necessary to conserve the identified species and habitats and priorities for implementing such actions;

5. Proposed plans for monitoring species identified in (1) and their habitats, for monitoring the effectiveness of the conservation actions proposed in (4), and for adapting these conservation actions to respond appropriately to new information or changing conditions;

6. Descriptions of procedures to review the Strategy at intervals not to exceed 10 years;

7. Plans for coordinating the development, implementation, review, and revision of the Strategy with federal, state, and local agencies and Indian tribes that manage significant land and water areas within Idaho or administer programs that significantly affect the conservation of identified species and habitats.

8. Congress has affirmed through WCRP and SWG, that broad public participation is an essential element of developing and implementing these Strategies, the projects that are carried out while these Strategies are developed, and the species in greatest need of conservation that Congress has indicated such programs and projects are intended to emphasize.

Q2. Must Idaho produce a State Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy if Congress approves no additional funding in subsequent years for this program?

A. Yes. Each State must submit a plan by October 2005 as Congress has mandated. If a State does not produce a State Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy, Federal Aid (FA) may require it to repay the funds it has used under this program.

Q3. Could some or all of Idaho's previous planning efforts and outcomes qualify as its State Wildlife Grant (SWG) Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy?

A. Yes. They can, as long as the State plan satisfies the requirements specified in the answer to Q1.

Q4. How is "wildlife" defined for the purposes of this program?

A. The term wildlife means "any species of wild, free-ranging animal, including fish, and also animals in captive breeding programs the object of which is to reintroduce individuals of a depleted indigenous species in a previously occupied range."

Q5. What is the meaning of "species in greatest need of conservation?"

A. IDFG will determine these species in the context of developing its Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy. These species must be animals, and not plants, and may include aquatic species and invertebrates. IDFG's list of "species in greatest need of conservation" may include currently listed federal and state wildlife species and other species of concern. We anticipate that the composition of this

list will change over time, as the status and conservation needs of a species change within Idaho.

Ferruginous Hawk
Buteo regalis

Aves — Falconiformes — Accipitridae

CONSERVATION STATUS / CLASSIFICATION

Rangewide:	Apparently secure (G4)
Statewide:	Vulnerable breeding (S3B)
ESA:	No status
USFS:	Region 1: No status; Region 4: No status
BLM:	Regional/State imperiled (Type 3)
IDFG:	Protected nongame

BASIS FOR INCLUSION
Population declines and threats.

TAXONOMY
No subspecies is recognized (Bechard and Schmutz 1995).

DISTRIBUTION AND ABUNDANCE
The ferruginous hawk breeds generally throughout western North America from southernmost Canada between the Great Plains and Rocky Mountains south to northern Arizona and New Mexico. Being an open–country species that inhabits grasslands, shrubsteppes, and deserts, this species is absent from most of northern and northeastern Idaho (Bechard et al. 1986, Bechard and Schmutz 1995). Distributed throughout southern Idaho, especially in shrubsteppe communities at the periphery of western piñon–juniper woodlands, the ferruginous hawk is primarily found in the Snake River plain (Groves et al. 1997*a*). A relatively uncommon species, it is estimated that there are approximately 625 breeding individuals in Idaho (Rosenberg 2004). Mostly absent from Idaho during the non–breeding season, the ferruginous hawk winters from northern California, western and southern Nevada, southwestern and northeastern Utah, extreme southern Wyoming, southwestern Nebraska, western and central Kansas and central Oklahoma, south through east–central Texas and Mexico to Baja California Norte, northern Sonora, Durango, and Coahuila (Bechard and Schmutz 1995).

POPULATION TREND
Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) data indicate negative population trends (although none is statistically significant) for the ferruginous hawk in Idaho for the long–term period 1966–2004 (–2.7% per year) and the more recent short–term period 1980–2004 (–11.8% per year) (Sauer et al. 2005). Across the species' larger range, such as at the level of the western BBS region or the U.S. as a whole, population trends are more stable to increasing, although again, none are statistically significant.

HABITAT AND ECOLOGY
The ferruginous hawk inhabits flat and rolling terrain in grassland or shrubsteppe regions, typically avoiding high elevation, forest interior, and narrow canyons (Bechard

and Schmutz 1995). Occurs in grasslands, sagebrush country, saltbrush–greasewood shrublands, and the periphery of pinyon–juniper and other forests (Olendorff 1993). In Idaho, becomes locally abundant at the interface between piñon–juniper and shrubsteppe environments (Powers et al. 1975). This species hunts from the air or perch, most frequently near sunrise or sunset. Nests in trees or on cliffs with up to 8–10 nests per 100 km^2 (39 mi^2) if conditions are favorable (Groves et al. 1997). Breeding males in Idaho were estimated to have an average home range of 7–8 km^2 (2.7–3.0 mi^2; Bechard et al. 1986). In Idaho, the ferruginous hawk is associated with nesting Swainson's hawks (*Buteo swainsoni*), commonly migrates southward in the fall, but resides year–round in limited numbers in the extreme southern part of the state (Groves et al. 1997*a*).

ISSUES

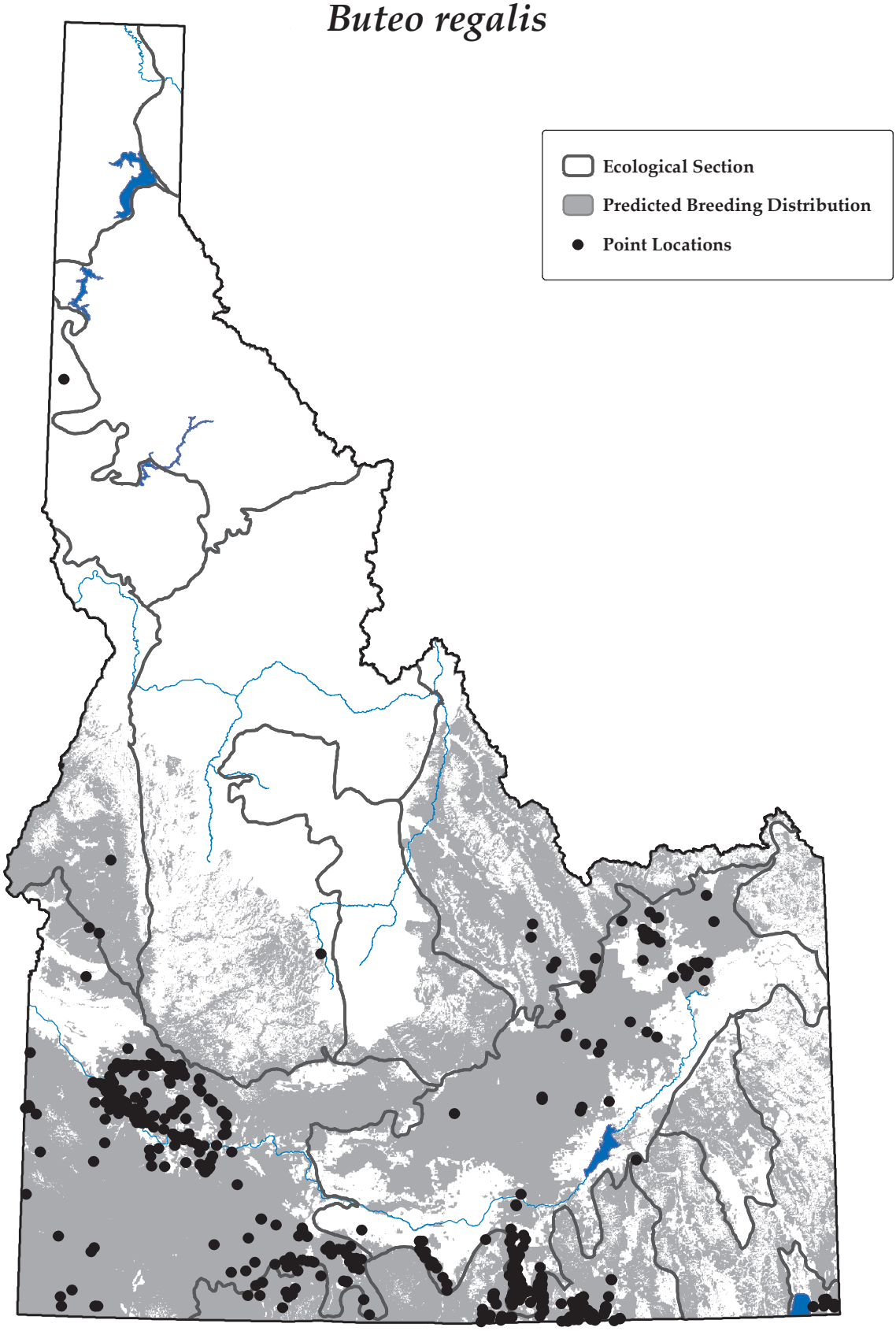
Main issue threatening the ferruginous hawk appears to be agricultural development and cultivation of native grasslands (Olendorff 1993, Groves et al. 1997*a*). Population declines have been attributed to the deleterious effects of cultivation, grazing, poisoning and controlling small mammals, mining, and fire in nesting habitats (Olendorff 1993). A more recent concern is the development of wind farms, such as those in southern Idaho, where hawks could potentially collide with turbines during spring and fall migration movements (Erickson et al. 2001).

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Primary conservation actions focused on maintaining or increasing current population numbers in Idaho should include enhancing nest substrates, maintaining prey populations (ground squirrels, etc.), and mitigating development impacts from wind farm turbines, mining, pipeline construction, and urbanization (Bechard and Schmutz 1995). Better data on mortality rates of migrating ferruginous hawks (and other raptors) as a result of wind farm development are needed.

Ferruginous Hawk

Buteo regalis



Map created on September 22, 2005
and prepared by Idaho Conservation Data Center.
Sources: Point data are from Idaho Conservation Data Center, Idaho Department of Fish and Game (2005). Predicted distribution is from the Wildlife Habitat Relationships Models (WHR), A Gap Analysis of Idaho: Final Report. Idaho Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, Moscow, ID (Scott et al. 2002). Predicted distribution is approximate (for more information, go to http://www.wildlife.uidaho.edu/idgap/idgap_report.asp).

0 20 40 80 Kilometers

0 20 40 80 Miles