Integration of Planning & Environmental Analysis in Transportation

How Natural Resources Conservation Fits into SAFETEA-LU Planning Rules

Transportation Research Board
Annual Meeting
January 2008

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Defenders of Wildlife
Outline

• Addressing SAFETEA-LU Planning Rules
• Plans:
  – Assessments (GAP)
  – Taxa specific
  – State Wildlife Action Plans
  – Ecoregional
  – Linkage Analysis
  – Green Infrastructure
SAFETEA-LU: Section 6001

“Consultation under clause (i) shall involve comparison of transportation plans to State and tribal conservation plans or maps, if available, and comparison of transportation plans to inventories of natural or historic resources, if available.”

• **Consultation** with resource agencies

• **Comparison** with conservation plans, maps

• Discussion of **mitigation** activities, areas
GAP Analysis

- **Goal:** Keep Common Species Common
- 38 Statewide and 3 regional
- Vegetation and animal distribution maps
- Gaps in protection

[gapanalysis.nbii.gov](gapanalysis.nbii.gov)
Taxa or Habitat Specific Plans

- North American Waterfowl Management Plan
- Partners in Flight Plans
- U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan
- North American Waterbird Conservation Plan
- North American Bird Conservation Initiative

www.nabci-us.org
Important Bird Areas

41 States with Identified Sites

> 2100 State Level IBAs

> 220 Million Acres of Identified IBAs

www.audubon.org/bird/iba
Oregon Biodiversity Project
State Wildlife Action Plans

State and Tribal Wildlife Grants
Program initiated in 2000

Plans created by State Fish and
Wildlife Agencies

Proactive, non-regulatory, non-game
conservation

Comprehensive Assessments:

- Priority species
- Priority habitats
- Conservation threats
- Conservation actions
- Coordination

www.wildlifeactionplans.org
Wildlife Plans Review

Essential Questions:

• Where should we work?
  (Conservation planning is a spatial exercise)

• What should we do when we get there?
  (Conservation Goals & Actions)

• What do we do first?
  (Prioritization)

• Summary of Results in Defenders report:
  “Conservation Across the Landscape: A Review of the State Wildlife Action Plans”

www.defenders.org/statewildlifeplans
Habitat Conservation: Mapping is Key

State Wildlife Action Plans
Mapping Status
Summer 2007

56% of States produced maps showing conservation focal areas
• All 51 Plans indicated that roads are an issue for wildlife
• 11 states – roads are a priority threat statewide
• 8 states – roads are a priority threat to at least one region, habitat type, or species
• 2 states – strong emphasis on transportation threats
Transportation Actions

- Modify Transportation Planning: 41
- Coordination: 40
- Site Design: 39
- Research: 30
- Vegetation Management: 16
- Land Protection: 11
- Monitoring: 10
- Education: 8
- Funding: 5

Number of Plans

Defenders of Wildlife
Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)

Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)
- Short-term planning on two year cycle.
- Includes future project list
- Often includes project costs
- Projects are NOT Guaranteed to be built

Project Selection
- Priority Projects
- Budget Constraints
- Politics

Points of Intervention

Sec 6001

SWAPS
- Goals and objectives
- Priority Conservation Species, Habitats, Issues
- Conservation Actions and Policies
- Priority Area Maps (Some)

NEPA Review Process
- Generally restricted to legal requirements.
- Costly and controversial to request changes at this point.
Habitat Connectivity Analysis

- Wildlife Linkages and Roads
- 11 Statewide
- 8 Regional
Green Infrastructure

Maryland GreenPrint

• 98% of rare species locations
• Hubs and Links Model
• Identifies areas for Restoration

www.greeninfrastructure.net

Source: Maryland Department of Natural Resources
Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan

Major elements:
• Critical Habitat & Biological corridors
• Riparian Protection
• Ranch Conservation
• Mountain Parks
• Cultural Resources

Incorporated conservation plan into comprehensive plan

www.pima.gov/CMO/SDCP/
Conclusions

• Roads are a problem for wildlife

• ESA addresses a limited suite of species of concern

• Focus on Avoidance: Section 6001 moves toward comprehensive strategic habitat conservation

• Spatial information exists in all states to incorporate into transportation planning

• SWAPs are the latest innovation in planning. They provide a framework to build upon . . . . but they’re not perfect.
For your consideration

- State Wildlife Actions Plans
- TNC Ecoregional Plans
- Important Bird Areas
- GAP Analysis
- Habitat Connectivity Analyses
- Green Infrastructure
- Natural Heritage programs
Resources

Linking Conservation and Transportation

Conservation Across the Landscape
www.defenders.org/statewildlifeplans

Second Nature
www.habitatandhighways.org

Eco-Logical
www.environment.fhwa.dot.gov/ecological/eco_index.asp

NatureServe (Heritage programs, Vista, Explorer)
www.natureserve.org