



The GPS
GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND STRATEGIES
Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment

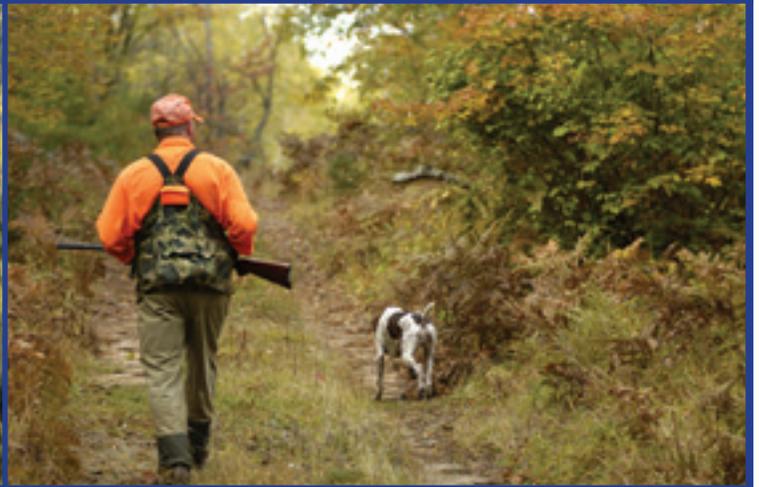
Wildlife Division Strategic Plan 2010-2015

Draft for Public Comment 10/07/10



TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| Getting Started | 3 |
| Getting a Fix on Our Satellites | 5 |
| Ground Truthing | |
| <i>Why We Developed the GPS</i> | 6 |
| <i>How We Developed the GPS</i> | 6 |
| True North | |
| <i>Our Mission</i> | 9 |
| <i>Our Principles</i> | 9 |
| Establishing Waypoints – Strategic Issues | |
| <i>Wildlife Population Management</i> | 10 |
| <i>Wildlife Habitat Management</i> | 10 |
| <i>Access to Lands for Wildlife Recreation</i> | 11 |
| <i>Hunting Heritage</i> | 11 |
| <i>Land Use and Economic Development</i> | 11 |
| <i>External Communication</i> | 12 |
| <i>Positive Relationships</i> | 12 |
| <i>Internal Communication</i> | 12 |
| <i>Workforce</i> | 12 |
| <i>Internal Administration</i> | 13 |
| <i>Infrastructure</i> | 13 |
| <i>Funding</i> | 13 |
| <i>Managing Adaptively</i> | 13 |
| Destinations – Goals, Objectives, and Strategies | |
| <i>Securing the Future of Michigan’s Wildlife</i> | 15 |
| <i>Enhancing Wildlife Recreation</i> | 20 |
| <i>Serving Michigan Citizens</i> | 22 |
| <i>Improving How We Work</i> | 23 |
| <i>Re-routing While Staying on Course</i> | 27 |
| Beginning Our Journey | 28 |



GETTING STARTED

Our State's wildlife is a resource that belongs to all of us and provides recreation, enjoyment, and reflection. It has shaped how our state was settled; it impacts our state's economy, attracts tourists, and is critical to our future. The Wildlife Division of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment is responsible for managing this public resource to be enjoyed today and conserved for tomorrow. We are on a journey to ensure that wildlife conservation continues to play a defining role in Michigan. This document, Guiding Principles and Strategies, or GPS, sets strategic direction for the next leg of this journey.

We are truly fortunate in this country that wildlife belongs to the public. Because the public owns wildlife, the government is given the privilege and responsible for managing wildlife for the benefit of everyone. This public trust doctrine, along with dedicated fund sources established in 1937, is at the core of wildlife restoration and management in the United States.

Success in Michigan has mirrored success at the national level. What began as the Game Division in 1928 was transformed into the Wildlife Division in 1968. Throughout our history, we have worked tirelessly to fulfill our public trust responsibilities to enhance, restore, and conserve the State's wildlife resources. Highly visible success stories include white-tailed deer, bear, and wild turkey, all of which were virtually extirpated in Michigan in the early 1900s.

Management throughout the 20th century focused on restoring populations decimated by over-harvest, loss of habitat, and environmental contamination. The early 21st century brings new management challenges. Although Michigan citizens continue to care deeply about wildlife and our natural resources, many are less connected to the natural world. Changes in technology and our economy have led to changes in land use patterns, rural development, and agricultural practices. Changes in the distribution and abundance of some species have led to increased human-wildlife conflicts. Declines in the number of hunters and trappers, and increases in the numbers of non-consumptive users of wildlife, present challenges and opportunities we must confront.

There are also challenges related to funding. Our funding primarily comes from participation in hunting and trapping, yet our public trust mandate covers all wildlife and there is growing demand to broaden our emphasis. At the same time, dedicated funding sources for wildlife management have not been growing at the pace of costs and expenditures necessary to maintain traditional programs. Increasingly, demands for wildlife from different user groups can be conflicting. Consequently, we cannot address all wildlife related desires in all areas of the state. Wildlife management needs to be reshaped to address priority issues while balancing the needs of competing interests.

This GPS clearly defines our priorities for wildlife management, prioritizes coordination of conservation efforts with our partners, and directs the transformation of the Wildlife Division into a more responsive agency serving the public to address contemporary and emerging wildlife issues. It was developed through an extensive engagement process with concerned interest groups, stakeholders, the Natural Resources Commission, the Legislature, conservation partners, and the public.

Naming this document GPS is intentional and it points toward our destination in five years. It establishes waypoints and provides our itinerary; it guides how the Wildlife Division will allocate our limited time and resources to priority issues and management needs. We may encounter unforeseen detours and roadblocks, and so this GPS is designed to be flexible and to account for change along the way. And, as this journey has no real end, this GPS is temporary; revisions are planned every five years.



GETTING A FIX ON OUR SATELLITES

The Wildlife Division could not get a fix on our position and determine the best routes to our destinations alone. Therefore, the GPS was prepared for and with assistance from:

The citizens of Michigan
Hunters and trappers
Other wildlife enthusiasts
Land conservancies
Sporting clubs and conservation organizations
Forest products industry
Agricultural producers
Manufacturers and retailers of wildlife related recreational goods
State, local, tribal, and federal governments
Researchers and universities
The Natural Resources Commission
The Michigan Legislature
Department of Natural Resources and Environment leadership and staff
Wildlife Division staff

We are deeply grateful to all that participated, and who shared their time, thoughts, and vision.

As a division within the Department of Natural Resources and Environment, we are proud that this GPS addresses all of the following departmental goals:

- Restoring, protecting, and managing our natural resources via ecosystem management
- Providing quality public outdoor recreation
- Revitalizing, expanding, and diversifying our user base
- Promoting stewardship of Michigan's natural resources through education, awareness, and action
- Being a great place to work
- Securing long-term sustainable financial support



GROUND TRUTHING

Why We Developed the GPS

The GPS is our navigational aid to:

- Provide clear direction and priorities that will guide our work
- Help guide the Natural Resources Commission and the Department of Natural Resources and Environment leadership develop and implement priorities and policies
- Assist other agencies and conservation partners develop plans and programs that are compatible with our public trust responsibilities
- Engage the public and other stakeholders and involve them in setting the destination for wildlife management
- Align our efforts with other planning efforts of the Department and our partners
- Make the Division more adaptive and more appropriately responsive to contemporary and emerging wildlife issues
- Increase efficiencies while improving the way our Division conducts business
- Improve interactions with our partners, stakeholders, and the general public

How We Developed the GPS

The GPS was developed from an engagement process that was open, transparent, and involved hundreds of individuals across the state and extensive input from Wildlife Division staff. Because so many people and groups were involved with the development of this plan, the document and the subsequent implementation is a reflection of their values, passions, and hard work.

- Before this strategic planning effort began, three major Wildlife Division internal meetings were held in 2009 to identify priority issues and emerging wildlife management needs.
- A strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats analysis was conducted at all Wildlife Division Management Unit and Section staff meetings during November 2009-January 2010.
- Forty-one focus group meetings for internal and external stakeholders were held around the state during January-March 2010. Over 1,800 people were invited and 267 people attended these meetings.
- Sixty-four personal interviews were conducted with state legislators, Natural Resources Commission members, Department Directors and Executive Staff, heads of key stakeholder groups, and Federal Agency Program leaders.
- An informational website and email address for submitting comments and questions were established in March 2010.



- Over 500 Department employees responded to an on-line survey of their opinions on working with the Wildlife Division.
- A group of 43 Wildlife Division employees met for three days in April 2010 to frame 13 strategic issues identified by the engagement process.
- A group of 50 Wildlife Division employees met for three days in late May 2010 to draft goals and objectives to address the strategic issues.
- Additional teams of Wildlife Division employees met during July to draft strategies designed to fulfill the identified goals and objectives.
- During July 2010, the Division conducted facilitated feedback sessions with constituents that had participated earlier in a focus group or personal interview to review draft goals and objectives.
- During late July and early August 2010, all Wildlife Division Management Units and Sections met to identify and discuss the consequences of implementing draft strategies.
- During August 2010, meetings were held with Natural Resources Commission members to solicit additional input.
- A draft of the goals, objectives, and strategies was developed and sent to all Wildlife Division employees and leadership of other Department divisions in August 2010 for review and comment.
- During September 2010 the draft GPS was presented to staff at a Wildlife Division-wide meeting to begin the implementation process.
- In October 2010, the draft GPS was presented to the Department leadership and the Natural Resources Commission and posted on the Department web site for public review.
- The Department and the Natural Resources Commission recommended the Director approve the GPS; the Director approved the GPS in _____.



TRUE NORTH

Our Mission:

To enhance, restore and conserve the State's wildlife resources, natural communities, and ecosystems for the benefit of Michigan's citizens, visitors and future generations.

Our Principles:

Public Service: The Wildlife Division believes it has the privilege and responsibility to serve the public by managing wildlife and wildlife habitat for the use and enjoyment by the citizens of Michigan and by communicating effectively and helping ensure the public understands wildlife management.

Public Trust Responsibilities: The Wildlife Division believes in the public trust doctrine; that wildlife resources are held in trust for the people of Michigan, and it is the privilege and responsibility of the Division to manage those resources wisely.

Scientific Management of Wildlife Resources: The Wildlife Division believes in the principles of scientific management of wildlife resources. Scientific management is in the public interest and sound science will be used to inform management decisions and to evaluate the course of those decisions.

Sustainability: The Wildlife Division believes it is our responsibility to facilitate the resolution of wildlife issues in a fashion that conserves the long-term viability of populations and the habitats upon which they depend.

Principles of Ecosystem Management: The Wildlife Division believes in a management approach that integrates biological, social and economic factors into a comprehensive strategy aimed at protecting and enhancing sustainability, diversity, and productivity of wildlife resources.

Adaptive Management: The Wildlife Division recognizes that our understanding of many ecosystem functions is incomplete and will improve with new information. Management approaches will be viewed as hypotheses to be tested by research, monitoring, and evaluation. This adaptive, empirical approach is useful and will be applied to processes used by the Division whenever possible.

Trust and Credibility: The Wildlife Division believes that trust and credibility are possible only when there is open and two-way communication.

Competence: The Wildlife Division believes that truly effective and efficient management can be achieved when personnel are well-trained, objective, and professional.

ESTABLISHING WAYPOINTS – STRATEGIC ISSUES

Our engagement process identified 13 strategic issues that helped determine our goals, objectives, and strategies; they are:

Wildlife Population Management

Most of Michigan's citizens agree that wildlife populations in the state are important, but distribution and abundance of a particular species plays a role in how they are valued. The distribution and abundance of populations are not the same across the landscape and are influenced by many factors. While human actions can have positive effects on the availability of food and shelter through habitat management, other factors (such as climate, soils, and sources of water) can limit distribution and abundance. Disease can also be a limiting factor that management actions can often mitigate. Public opinion and perception of wildlife abundance and distribution are diverse. Themes range from "too many" of some species to "not enough" of other species, and individual opinions often conflict. Values placed on wildlife may include the consumptive value of game species, the recreational value of non-game species, or the intrinsic value of threatened and endangered species. Other groups and individuals may devalue wildlife because they influence their livelihood (e.g., crop damage, urban nuisance animals). The definition of over- or under- abundance differs based on values, and an attempt to balance conflicting values is inherently controversial.

Wildlife Habitat Management

Manipulation of habitat conditions to encourage (or discourage) the distribution and abundance of wildlife species is key to the management of wildlife. Habitat manipulations typically benefit some species while discouraging others. Many techniques are used to achieve habitat goals, including managing water in wetlands, timber cutting, tree planting, prescribed burning, and retention of dead trees and downed logs in forests. Although targeted timber cutting is one of the most frequently used land-management techniques in Michigan today, particularly in partnership with the Department's Forest Management Division, many stakeholders and partners do not recognize timber cutting as part of wildlife management. Both external and internal stakeholders are increasingly aware of the role of private lands to Michigan's wildlife. Most habitat management by the Wildlife Division occurs on Department-owned land, yet most Michigan land, and where most hunting occurs, is private. Stakeholders and partners also are concerned with emerging issues, particularly invasive species, diseases, and land use practices (including poorly planned development). They frequently ask the Wildlife Division to lead efforts to minimize negative impacts from these issues on wildlife habitat. In addition, impacts from climate change and alternative energy demands on habitats and wildlife populations are identified as two areas the Wildlife Division needs to address with increased effort in the future.

Land Use and Economic Development

Land is a finite resource and impacts from land use are diverse, increasing, and often conflict. Land use pressures have resulted in many impacts on wildlife through habitat loss, alteration, and fragmentation, making it challenging to maintain sustainable wildlife habitat and populations. Historically, land use decisions have been vested in local units of government and often cumulative or other natural resource impacts are not considered. Land use decisions are value-based and may not take into account the consequences on wildlife habitat or wildlife populations. Although Michigan's human population has stabilized with a corresponding slow down in land use changes, global increases in human populations will affect demands for Michigan's agriculture, water resources, energy production, housing, and manufacturing. There is essentially no statewide policy with regard to consistent multi-jurisdictional land use planning or incentives to consider wildlife resource issues in making local land use planning decisions. Currently, there are no Department or Division mandates that relate to statewide land use policy or encourage staff to engage in local land use decisions that have the potential to impact wildlife habitat.

Access to Lands for Wildlife Recreation

Access to lands for hunting, trapping, and other outdoor recreation is an important factor influencing participation in these activities. Research shows that individuals are more likely to pursue hunting activities if available lands are within 15 miles of their residence. Michigan benefits from the second largest acreage of public land in states east of the Mississippi River, yet nearly 90% of residents live in southern Michigan where only 3% of the land is publicly owned. Both internal and external stakeholders and partners repeatedly identified the decline of hunters and the general trend of disengagement from the outdoors as a significant issue. Private lands provide tremendous wildlife recreational opportunities, yet land use practices (e.g., development) continue to impact lands once available for hunting and trapping. With the drastic decline in enrollment of private lands in the Division's Hunter Access Program, this issue cannot be addressed without addressing the causes for this decline.

Hunting Heritage

The number of hunters and trappers in Michigan has remained relatively stable over the last five years, yet the proportion of Michigan's residents who hunt or trap has slowly declined over the last decade. Many factors influence the decline of hunting and trapping as recreational activities, yet these declines are important considerations when framing future conservation issues and solutions. Michigan's large public land base and history as a leader in environmental protection is an outcome of a cultural heritage that values the outdoors and hunters, trappers, and anglers as conservationists. Those who do not understand or appreciate the cultural heritage of hunting and trapping and the direct link to conservation may inadvertently support legislation that restricts hunting and trapping without realizing they may be reducing revenues for management of lands they enjoy.

External Communication

Communication with the public was often identified as a shortcoming during focus group meetings. The Wildlife Division has diverse stakeholders and partners. The lack of an effective communication strategy can lead to misinterpretations about the Division's intentions and management decisions and may harm trust and credibility. External stakeholders and partners felt if the Wildlife Division were to be more successful, effective communication with the public should be a higher priority. Stakeholders and partners desire and appreciate opportunities to engage the Wildlife Division. Many felt the Division has many good success stories to tell, yet they are not shared often enough with the public.

Positive Relationships

Establishing and fostering relationships with individuals and groups interested in wildlife resources was mentioned at every focus group meeting. Four broad areas included entering into partnerships with other agencies, organizations, and stakeholder groups to achieve common goals; collaboration on projects and activities by other agencies or organizations; using volunteers to assist in division efforts; and relating to the unengaged public as a potential to build support for Division programs. Partners, external stakeholders, and Division employees repeatedly stressed the broad mandate of managing wildlife resources cannot be successfully addressed by the Division alone, particularly under current funding and staffing levels. Generally speaking, the perception of the Division by partners and collaborators is positive, yet many commented on the need to make greater use of these relationships.

Internal Communication

Wildlife Division staff felt that increased clarity of priorities and expectations from the Division leadership related to individuals' day-to-day work was essential for effectiveness. A desire for increased accountability was often discussed in relation to priority setting. Division staff expressed frustration with a perception of being left "in the dark" (priorities and decisions not explained), and shared thoughts concerning unsupportive supervision (not enough guidance or positive feedback from supervisors). Although the Division has made progress toward improving communication internally (e.g., using Go-To meeting software, e-mailing press releases, and weekly messages from the Chief), additional improvements to methods and means of communication will add value to these efforts.

Workforce

There is a general perception among the public that field staff are passionate, often are considered experts, and were easy to communicate with and helpful, however there was less understanding of the role played by Division staff in Lansing. In addition, many felt the Wildlife Division was "overwhelmed and underappreciated." Division employees identified concerns related to the work environment, accountability, and professional development opportunities. Many felt the Division should continue to place a priority on accountability and use performance management and work planning as tools to enhance an employee's ability to succeed. Individuals and the Division should understand that professional development is a joint venture where both are responsible for their share and both benefit. In addition, the Division should strive to employ wildlife professionals that are the best fit to Division and Department priorities and needs.

Internal Administration

Wildlife Division employees across the State identified administrative processes as being a barrier to successfully implementing habitat and population management projects and some stakeholders echoed this sentiment. These concerns can be categorized into five main areas: misconceptions or lack of understanding of a procedure; legally mandated administrative procedures that leave little room for modification; biologically trained staff trying to complete complicated administrative processes; procedures that require complicated hierarchical and time-consuming approval paths; and perceived redundancy in processes.

Infrastructure

Infrastructure consists of the physical resources necessary for the Division to accomplish its mission, including buildings, technology, equipment, vehicles, pumps, dikes, dams, roads, bridges, and other structures constructed and maintained by Division staff. Currently, the Division has infrastructure ranging from brand new construction such as pump stations in the Saginaw Bay Management Unit, to aging dams in the Southwest Management Unit in need of emergency repair, to network connections still dependent upon dial-up phone lines. This diverse array of infrastructure requires routine maintenance and periodic upgrading in order to ensure continued usefulness.

Funding

The Wildlife Division budget comes from a number of sources including revenues generated from the sale of hunting licenses, federal and state restricted funds, revenues generated on lands managed by the Wildlife Division, and competitive grants. Only about 6% of the Division budget comes from the state's general fund (i.e., tax revenue). Current funding is used to support a wide array of wildlife programs such as the maintenance of nearly 400,000 acres of State Game and Wildlife Areas, statewide habitat initiatives, operation of managed waterfowl areas, threatened and endangered species recovery efforts, wildlife health monitoring, and co-management of nearly 4 million acres of State forest. Although there is a general lack of understanding among the public about how the funding sources are used within the Division, there is support to explore new and stable funding options for Division programs. Because a large proportion of funding is derived from license sales, concern was expressed over the trends in participation in hunting and trapping recreation and long-term funding impacts.

Managing Adaptively

The Division will always have an incomplete knowledge of species and their habitats, so monitoring the results of our management efforts is critical to provide science-based recommendations. However, the Division's monitoring of populations and habitat is inconsistent. Some programs have explicit goals, strategies, and monitoring programs and others do not. In addition, it is not always a part of the work culture of the Division to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of administrative or other work processes not related to populations or habitats. Improvements to these processes using an adaptive approach will be beneficial.



DESTINATIONS – GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES

We have arranged the 13 identified issues or waypoints into the following five destinations. For each, we describe what the landscape will look like when we arrive in 2015. The routes we have chosen to arrive at these destinations are provided in the goals, objectives, and strategies.

Securing the Future of Michigan's Wildlife

Our Vision of Success in 2015: Wildlife population and habitat management occurs on all land ownerships at ecologically appropriate scales according to statewide priorities. It is administered at the regional level to focus management on regional issues. Decisions are supported by scientific facts and principles, and reflect the needs of species, desires of partners and concerns of stakeholders, and changing conditions and information. We continually evaluate our work to ensure we are effective stewards of Michigan's natural resources. The Division provides technical support to land use planning and economic development efforts to limit and mitigate negative impacts on wildlife. We work with partners to secure the future of Michigan's wildlife and their habitats.

Goal: Goal: Manage for sustainable populations of wildlife species

Objective: Manage game populations to provide hunting and trapping opportunities while maintaining populations in balance with available habitat, land-use practices, and stakeholder values

Strategies:

- Monitor and assess game populations to inform management
- Develop and implement species management plans, based on population management needs
- Develop and implement a process for recommending harvest regulations based on regional and local priorities and goals to the Natural Resources Commission
- Modify management to address over- or under-abundance or human/wildlife interactions based on population assessments
- Align habitat management to help move game population numbers in the desired direction
- Conduct research to provide new and synthesized information to inform decisions regarding regulations and population management
- Focus population management efforts on lands where the Division can have the greatest impact for desired targets
- Partner with Federal land managers to ensure game species targets are taken into consideration
- Partner with other conservation organizations and groups to promote and enhance populations where appropriate

Objective: Prioritize and address population management needs for non-game wildlife

Strategies:

- Annually meet our responsibilities under both Federal and State threatened and endangered species laws
- Revise the Wildlife Action Plan to prioritize management needs for non-game wildlife and implement priority actions
- Develop and implement species management plans based on priority management needs
- Conduct research and monitoring to support biodiversity conservation
- Work with partners to promote and improve management of non-game wildlife populations

Objective: Respond to disease outbreaks that could impact wildlife

Strategies:

- Monitor the health of wildlife at a statewide level
- Develop strategies for the prevention and control of disease
- Protect free ranging wildlife from disease by regulating captive wildlife facilities
- Respond appropriately to disease outbreaks and prepare for those diseases expected to seriously impact Michigan's wildlife
- Conduct research to inform decisions regarding wildlife disease
- Work with partners to address wildlife health issues

Objective: Respond to emerging issues that will impact wildlife

Strategies:

- Identify emerging issues and provide recommendations for addressing priorities
- Align research activities with management needs related to emerging issues
- Modify population management efforts based on recommendations



Objective: Develop coordinated statewide and regional approaches to address wildlife distribution and abundance by 2012, and implement by 2013

Strategies:

- Develop a wildlife management framework that addresses regional wildlife concerns and accounts for statewide priorities
- Develop urban, nuisance, and invasive wildlife policies; prioritize and address management needs
- Conduct research to provide new and synthesized information to inform management decisions
- Consider climate change impacts on wildlife populations when developing management strategies
- Coordinate with partners to accomplish Wildlife Division's management priorities

Goal : Manage habitat for sustainable wildlife populations in a changing environment

Objective: Develop coordinated statewide and regional approaches to managing habitat by 2011, and implement by 2013

Strategies:

- Use a featured species approach to focus, monitor the effectiveness of, and communicate accomplishments of habitat management
- Describe the desired future habitat conditions and management direction for wildlife areas in Master Plans, and implement
- Manage habitat on wildlife areas to support featured species management targets and to demonstrate habitat improvement techniques to conservation partners
- Address priority invasive species management needs
- Conduct habitat research to inform habitat management decisions
- Consider climate change impacts when developing habitat management strategies
- On co-managed lands work collaboratively with Forest Management and Recreation divisions, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service to manage wildlife habitat
- On private lands, provide technical assistance and resources to support Wildlife Division's habitat management needs

Objective: Determine and prioritize needs to support biodiversity conservation at ecologically appropriate scales by 2015

Strategies:

- Assess adequate ecological representation of habitats to support diverse wildlife populations
- Work with other divisions and partners to complete and begin implementation of the Department's Biodiversity Conservation Planning Process

Objective: Respond to emerging issues that will impact wildlife habitat

Strategies:

- Identify emerging issues and provide recommendations for addressing these issues
- Align research activities with management needs related to emerging issues
- Modify our habitat management efforts based on recommendations

Goal: Mitigate the negative impacts of human land use on wildlife habitats

Objective: Enhance and coordinate how technical support is provided to land use planners by 2015

Strategies:

- Provide State legislature with information to increase the likelihood that wildlife and habitat values are considered in legislation
- Work with partners to develop land use planning tools that help facilitate wildlife and habitat information into land use decisions
- At a regional scale, provide land managers with technical support and tools to improve the incorporation of wildlife and habitat values into land use decisions (focus on the 14 regional Councils of Government)



Objective: Protect Department-owned lands and infrastructure from uses that interfere with wildlife management

Strategies:

- Monitor and respond to legislation, regulations, policy, and procedures that may impact Department-owned lands purchased or managed for wildlife purposes
- Create or revise policies and procedures to address allowable land uses
- Resolve land matters consistently to protect lands for their wildlife purposes

Objective: Update the strategic guidance for Wildlife Division's land acquisition by 2012

Strategies:

- Revise Division land acquisition and prioritization process to include habitat and species protection and public land access needs
- Evaluate and seek competitive funds for strategic land acquisition



Enhancing Wildlife Recreation

Our Vision of Success in 2015: Michigan citizens value and support our hunting and trapping heritage. Citizens are also aware of the role hunting and trapping have in managing game species, and the significant financial contributions these activities have on the state's economy and wildlife conservation. Participation in hunting and trapping recreation has remained strong and is becoming a life-long activity for many. Access to land for hunting and trapping has increased across all land ownerships, especially in areas close to population centers. Participation in other wildlife-based outdoor recreation is increasing across the State.

Goal: Increase public participation, acceptance, and support of hunting and trapping and increase participation in non-consumptive wildlife-related recreation

Objective: Maintain or increase the public acceptance rate of hunting and trapping to 80%

Strategies:

- Work with the Department's Marketing, Education and Technology Division to promote hunting and trapping heritage and wildlife management
- Promote and support media programs that market a positive vision of hunting heritage
- Work cooperatively with the Department's Recreation Division to develop programs to educate park users about hunting and trapping heritage and wildlife management

Objective: Provide ongoing support for hunting and trapping recruitment efforts

Strategies:

- Support research and surveys to identify ways to increase hunter and trapper recruitment in Michigan
- Work with conservation clubs and organizations to promote outdoor recreation, hunting, trapping and develop mentoring programs



Objective: Increase the retention rate of hunting and trapping license purchasers by 25% by 2015

Strategies:

- Support research and surveys to identify ways to increase hunter and trapper retention in Michigan
- Increase small game hunting opportunities and promote small game hunting on public and private lands, especially in southern Michigan
- Make regulations language as clear as possible
- Remove obstacles to participation and purchasing licenses
- Explore incentives to encourage repeated license buying

Objective: Provide access to an additional 20,000 acres of land for public hunting and trapping recreation by 2015

Strategies:

- Enhance the Hunter Access Program to increase enrollment to 15,000 acres
- Promote existing tools and develop new tools to increase hunter access to private lands
- Develop more access to public land for hunters and trappers with disabilities
- Work with partners to remove legal or regulatory barriers to hunting and trapping on lands not managed by the Wildlife Division

Objective: Increase participation in non-consumptive wildlife-based outdoor recreation by 10% by 2015

Strategies:

- Maintain programs that provide for wildlife-based outdoor recreation
- Work with partners to promote wildlife viewing opportunities
- Establish and maintain more formal contacts with non-consumptive wildlife groups



Serving Michigan Citizens

Our Vision of Success in 2015: Communication and engagement with the public is open and meaningful. The Division's communications strategy includes messages to the public which are consistent and understandable. Our partnerships are strong, resulting in a large number of wildlife conservation projects across the state. Our communication efforts foster a trusting relationship with partners, resulting in less controversy and enabling the pursuit of common goals for wildlife management and conservation.

Goal: Improve communication and engagement with the public regarding wildlife issues

Objective: Increase public understanding and awareness of wildlife management and Division programs by 2015

Strategies:

- Develop and implement a public communications strategy
- Provide staff with public communications training and tools
- Provide information and materials to the public that are user friendly
- Prioritize and address needs for outreach and education
- Work with the Department's Marketing, Education, and Technology Division to develop a marketing plan to promote Wildlife Division programs

Objective: Improve coordination and effectiveness of public engagement efforts by 2015

Strategies:

- Evaluate and revise public engagement methods
- Communicate to partners and stakeholders opportunities for public engagement and explain how public engagement informs decision making

Goal: Foster positive working relationships with other agencies and organizations.

Objective: Increase collaborations with conservation partners and volunteers to implement wildlife goals by 2015

Strategies:

- Develop and enhance partner and stakeholder coalitions to engage in Division planning efforts and support management programs
- Coordinate with partner volunteer programs where appropriate

Improving How We Work

Our Vision of Success in 2015: The Wildlife Division has an open and collaborative culture where employees understand and support each other's job duties and program areas. This culture is supported by open and honest communication and regular contact among employees. Similarly, the Division maintains open and honest communication with other Department divisions and with the Natural Resources Commission. Employees value the Division because they feel the Division values them. The Division hires and develops promising and competent employees, outfits them with a modern workplace, and retains them for a career. The Division invests in our employees. Working together, our employees have established priorities and matched those priorities with our existing funds. Gaps in funding priorities are identified and strategies are in place to help fill those gaps.

Goal: Improve internal communications and relationships

Objective: Develop an internal communication strategy by 2012 and implement upon completion

Strategies:

- Develop an internal communication strategy that facilitates open, honest, collaborative, and streamlined communications
- Train staff to improve communication skills
- Hold supervisors accountable for improving communications with staff
- Increase personal methods (e.g., phone calls, face-to-face meetings) of communication between staff

Objective: Increase understanding of the roles and responsibilities of different positions in the Division by 2015.

Strategies:

- Create opportunities for staff to job shadow and participate in special assignments outside of their unit
- Clearly define and document roles and responsibilities and decision-making authorities for different positions
- Provide annual opportunity for all Division staff to meet in person to build relationships, share successes and lessons learned, and increase collaborations
- Create mentoring program for new staff that includes a field and a Lansing-based mentor
- Increase opportunities for staff to interact with key Division contractors (e.g., Partnership for Ecosystem Research and Management faculty, Michigan Natural Features Inventory)

Goal: Increase effectiveness and reduce time and energy needed to complete administrative processes

Objective: Annually revise and improve at least three administrative processes

Strategies:

- Prioritize inefficient processes and schedule the top three to be addressed each year
- Map processes and address identified bottlenecks, redundancies, or other issues

Objective: Provide enhanced support for completion of administrative processes

Strategies:

- Provide enhanced centralized guidance on Division administrative processes
- Establish and train local experts on key administrative processes so they can provide support to coworkers

Goal: Provide equipment and facilities to fulfill Wildlife Division program priorities

Objective: Provide all staff with appropriate facilities and business support tools by 2015

Strategies:

- Evaluate inventory and analyze existing facilities and business tools to ensure Division priorities can be met
- Systematically address any identified facility upgrades and business support tool needs

Objective: Provide all staff with appropriate equipment for maintaining facilities and habitat by 2015

Strategies:

- Evaluate inventory and analyze existing equipment to ensure Division priorities can be met
- Provide better mechanisms and accountability for staff to share division equipment across work and management unit boundaries
- Systematically address any identified equipment needs



Objective: Annually, ensure habitat and public access infrastructure is maintained for its wildlife management purposes

Strategies:

- Ensure all infrastructure supporting habitat projects is maintained in a safe and operable condition
- Ensure that policies and procedures exist, or are revised as necessary, to address allowable infrastructure uses
- Determine where standardization of certain aspects of game area maintenance is needed and implement consistent practices

Goal: Attract, develop, and retain a highly qualified workforce

Objective: Make positions more attractive to highly qualified applicants by 2015

Strategies:

- Identify positions that historically have low numbers of qualified applicants
- Develop workable remedies to make positions more attractive to a greater diversity of applicants
- When filling positions, ensure every position is open to outside applicants to the extent possible
- Identify key positions or programs where continuity and leadership is essential, and develop a succession plan

Objective: Develop a strategic training program by 2012 and fully implement by 2015

Strategies:

- Provide and evaluate trainings that create opportunities for diverse geographic and program experiences for employees
- Develop training expectations for each classification
- Develop and implement a professional development plan for each employee based on classification training expectations
- Annually evaluate progress on individual training plans and the effectiveness of the training



Objective : Increase employee satisfaction, effectiveness, and accountability by 2012

Strategies:

- Measure employee satisfaction to determine factors that decrease employee satisfaction, effectiveness, and retention, bi-annually
- Address identified factors that affect employee satisfaction, effectiveness, and retention, where possible
- Enhance leadership training and empower employees to be leaders
- Explore ways to decrease the staff to supervisor ratio to increase effective communications and accountability

Goal: Effectively fund priorities identified in this strategic plan

Objective: Determine how monies will be used to implement this strategic plan by October 1 of each year.

Strategies:

- Develop an annual operational budget that aligns plan priorities with available monies
- Evaluate spending quarterly to ensure implementation is effective, and make adjustments as needed

Objective: Annually seek and secure additional resources to support unfunded priorities

Strategies:

- Identify gaps between available funds and Division priorities
- Identify and secure alternative resources to address gaps in funding and increase the number of funded priorities
- Facilitate the accomplishment of Wildlife Division priorities by other agencies, universities, or other partners

Objective: Work with partners to develop a strategic long-term funding plan for the Wildlife Division by 2015

Strategies:

- Map the Division's current fund sources and legal spending mandates
- Evaluate possible funding initiatives used by other states and countries
- With involvement of the Department's Executive Office and partners, develop a strategy to secure long-term funding to support the Division's mission

Re-routing While Staying on Course

Our Vision of Success in 2015: The Wildlife Division is an agency with a culture that values learning and innovation. We recognize that in a changing environment we cannot be certain of the outcomes of management practices. However, rather than hesitating, we keep moving forward, carefully monitoring and assessing the effects of our actions to learn from them. We are prepared to respond to emerging issues and unforeseen challenges without reacting in ways that divert us from arriving at our five-year destinations. Our Division culture encourages and supports employees to take innovative approaches, especially to unexpected roadblocks and detours. The Division uses its strategic plan to implement our strategic objectives while learning, adapting, and holding ourselves accountable.

Goal: Address our established priorities while being more appropriately responsive and less reactive to emerging and urgent issues

Objective: Develop and implement an accountability system for the Division by 2011

Strategies:

- Establish priorities based on this strategic plan on an annual and long-term basis
- Require work and work loads to be aligned with established priorities; clearly state in work plans and accomplishment directives how established priorities are being addressed
- Measure progress toward meeting goals, and incorporate implementation and evaluation of this plan into performance objectives
- Monthly, update Management Team on progress toward implementing this plan
- Quarterly, provide status report on implementation of this plan to the Division and the Natural Resources Commission; make available to the public
- Annually, produce report on accomplishments to staff and public

Objective: Annually monitor and appropriately respond to emerging and urgent issues in the context of established priorities

Strategies:

- Identify emerging and urgent issues and provide recommendations for addressing priority concerns
- Enhance flexibility in responding to urgent issues by providing specialized cross training for staff
- Document and communicate decisions made and actions taken on emerging issues

BEGINNING OUR JOURNEY

We are embarking on a journey into the future of wildlife management in Michigan using a key navigational aid, the GPS. Wildlife Division staff will bear the burden to ensure the plan is implemented and the responsibility of managing Michigan's wildlife resources is fulfilled. Involvement from citizens, stakeholders, partners, and staff was crucial for development of this plan. This same level of involvement will be critical as the GPS is used to navigate into an uncertain future. Michigan citizens, stakeholders, and our partners will be important elements in moving towards our destinations by assisting with projects and holding the Wildlife Division accountable to the direction set by this GPS. Just as we worked together to build a common vision we will need to work together to fulfill that vision.

As this plan is implemented, by managing adaptively the Wildlife Division will strive to become a learning organization with improved performance and accountability. Adaptive management requires that management activities are designed as experiments with expectations described in advance. Progress will be monitored and evaluated to understand how planned actions met expectations. Comparisons between expected outcomes and actual outcomes will be made and activities adjusted as needed to improve our work.

The GPS contains the routes and destinations of our five-year trip, and we will detail the itinerary of each annual leg through annual work plans and budgets to properly allocate our staff and resources. We will develop an annual report to allow the public, stakeholders, and our partners to monitor our progress. This report will detail what was actually accomplished with an evaluation of any deviations from our itinerary and why we were off track.

The Wildlife Division commits to planning, monitoring, and evaluating our annual progress of the GPS. Changes may occur based on new information or circumstances and we will take the necessary detours to still follow our routes and reach our destinations. These reviews and evaluations along with continued engagement with our partners will ensure the GPS remains active and relevant in a changing environment as it directs us towards our common vision for wildlife conservation in Michigan.







**Michigan Department
of Natural Resources
and Environment**