**ACTION 3 WORKSHEET: Engage, Support, Inspire State Agency Leadership**

State wildlife agencies’ mission statements (check your agency [**here**](http://statewildlifetoolkit.nwf.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/State-Fish-and-Wildlife-Agency-Mission-Statements.pdf)) lay out their charge and duty to take care of all wildlife for all people. These agencies have a proven track record with game and sportfish, employing well-trained professional biologists to apply proven wildlife management techniques to recover numerous wildlife species. Wildlife diversity programs are often a division within the agency that manages a large suite of mammals, birds, amphibians, invertebrates, and sometimes plants that typically are not game or sportfish. Currently, wildlife diversity programs with their limited funding and few staff often fall lower in the agency structure and have limited means to inform agency leadership decision making. With our growing wildlife crisis, we must increase both agency expertise, capacity, and ability to include the needs of all wildlife when making important habitat restoration and acquisition decisions.

This worksheet helps you assess your agency’s governance, leadership, mission, authorities and capacity gaps so that you can find the best ways to engage, support and inspire state agency leadership and governing entities to create the state wildlife agency of the future. It is not necessary to fill out this entire worksheet – it is meant to serve as a guide. Try contacting members of your state wildlife agency (e.g., wildlife diversity manager) to help you find some of this information.

**Organization**

What is your agency mission statement?

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Where is your wildlife agency in the overall government (organizational govt chart)?

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* Is it in a Department of Natural Resources (DNR) or an independent agency?

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* Does the head of your wildlife agency report directly to the governor? YES or NO

Which are the governing entities for your agency (highlight which ones):

* Commission
* DNR Board
* Wildlife Diversity Advisory Council?
* Legislative committees (House and Senate)
* Any other councils or advisory groups? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Summarize their responsibilities:

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* Do they have authorities beyond setting hunting/fishing seasons?

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* Do they have budget authority? YES or NO
* Do they approve the strategic plan? YES or NO
* Do they approve the State Wildlife Action Plan? YES or NO
* Other responsibilities:

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Who are your commissioners/board members?

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What are the commissioner/board member eligibility requirements?

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What is their appointment process?

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Check existing composition

* Race, gender, age
* Recreational and/or business interests representing
* Personal interests of existing members

Check timetable for next appointments

Identify 3 potential future commissioners/board members:

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| 1. | 2. | 3. |

Identify meeting schedule: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Identify process to request being on the agenda: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Identify other groups to attend meetings:

Which groups already attend regularly?

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Which groups are underrepresented?

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Which groups are most likely to start attending?

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**Directors**

Who is the current director?

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When were they appointed?

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What are their personal interests and agency goals?

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How is the director of the fish and wildlife agency/division appointed? Any specific qualifications?

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Last four directors’ tenure?

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Identify 3 potential future directors to advocate for their appointment:

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| 1. | 2. | 3. |

**Staff**

Identify senior staff (names and titles):

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Is there a wildlife diversity (aka nongame) program? YES or NO

If so, who is the leader?

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Who is the State Wildlife Action Plan lead staff?

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**Legislative Authority**

Is there a definition of wildlife in the state code? If so, what is it:

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What does the agency have legislative authority for?

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* Does it include native plants (if not, what agency does)?

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* Endangered and threatened species?

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* Invertebrates (if not, what agency does)?

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Are there any other gaps?

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**Structure and Capacity**

Structure:

* Obtain and review organizational chart (check agency website)
* Is the agency organized by topic, species groups, habitat, or other?

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* Are game and wildlife diversity (nongame) programs integrated or separate? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Where does your wildlife diversity program manager sit in the agency?

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* Who do they report to?

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* How many steps are they from the agency director? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Are they part of the director’s leadership team? YES or NO

Capacity:

* How many staff does the agency have overall? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* What is the number of wildlife diversity staff and what are their responsibilities?

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* Are there any significant gaps in expertise?

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* Are regional staff dedicated to wildlife diversity or is it centralized in HQ?

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* Is there a staff cap for the agency (referred to as a Full Time Equivalent (FTE) cap? What is it?

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* Does the agency have human dimensions staff to help it understand the various publics?

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* Does the agency or other state partner have a citizen science program(s)? If so for what kind of data?

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**Diversity, Equity and Inclusion:**

What are your state’s demographics? Are they reflected on the commission and in agency leadership or overall staffing?

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Are gender, race and other diversity needs represented in agency leadership and through staff?

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What is your agency’s equity and justice recruitment plan?

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Does the agency have a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy?

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Does the agency have a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Staff lead?

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**Conservation**

State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP)

* Does your agency have an implementation plan for its SWAP? YES or NO
  + Does it have the actions prioritized? YES or NO
  + Does it have the species prioritized? YES or NO
  + Does it include maps of priority habitats? YES or NO
  + Does it have an implementation budget? YES or NO
* What is the revision timeline?

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* What groups provided public input last time?

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* What kind of forum(s) were created to gather this input?

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* Does the Wildlife Action Plan include plants? YES or NO
* Does the Wildlife Action Plan include insects? YES or NO
* Does the Wildlife Action Plan include education and recreation? YES or NO
* Has the plan’s species list and actions been integrated into other federal, state, tribal and local agency plans? If so, which ones?

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* Has the plan’s species list and actions been integrated into priorities for NGOs? If so, which ones:

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* Is climate change recognized in the agency plan?

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* + Has there been a vulnerability assessment conducted for species and habitats?

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* + Are there any state or local adaptation plans?

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* + Do these plans incorporate Species of Greatest Conservation Need or do the State Wildlife Action Plans refer to these plans?

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* Are any species considered “data deficient” and require further research?

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Elements:

* Does your agency or state have a master naturalist program? Who runs it?

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* Does your agency have an urban wildlife program? If so, what is its focus/responsibilities?

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* Does your agency’s law enforcement work on species that are not hunted or fished?

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* Does your agency provide technical assistance to communities (local government)? If so what kind?

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**Recreation**

What existing infrastructure and recruitment programs does your agency have to support recreation opportunities?

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And for which recreationists?

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Does your agency provide the following programs or opportunities (if with a partner, then list partner):

* Wildlife viewing sites that provide viewing blinds and observation platforms, field guides, self-guides tours, and on-site guides and equipment? Note if this is on agency’s Wildlife Management Areas (or equivalent):

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* Provide outdoor skills trainings (how-to and where-to clinics) for hunters and anglers, birding, photography, camping, gardening for wildlife, etc.? Describe these programs:

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* Increase access for wildlife viewing and other outdoor recreation through easements, facilitates development, and land protection?

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* Develop trails including wildlife-related ones like birding trails?

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* Is the state’s watchable wildlife viewing guide updated and available digitally?

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* Promote economic development related to nature-based tourism? Is there a working relationship with the state department of tourism or local chambers of commerce?

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* Support wildlife festivals, special wildlife viewing events, and nature photography contests? List names and dates:

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Does your state’s Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan identify wildlife-related needs?

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Are there any user surveys that identify what different recreationists want from the agency?

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Identify strongest existing recreation programs and their adaptability to be used for other recreationists:

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Identify gaps in recreational programs:

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**Education**

What programs currently exist that connect children and adults to wildlife and nature?

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* Does it include providing outdoor classroom opportunities? YES or NO
* Does it include curriculum improvements for pre-k through high school? Colleges and Universities? Describe them:

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* Who does the agency partner with on education? Does it include state and local parks, nature centers, museums, zoos, aquariums, botanical gardens? If so, which ones:

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* Is there a [Project Learning Tree](https://www.plt.org/), [Project WET](https://www.projectwet.org/) or [Project WILD](https://www.fishwildlife.org/projectwild) coordinator(s)?

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* Identify other existing educational programs:

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* Identify gaps in education programs:

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**Transparency and Accountability** - How and where does your agency:

* Share its accomplishments annually (e.g., an annual report on its website)?

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* Host regular public meetings, aside from commission/board meetings?

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* Host an annual meeting with stakeholders?

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* Post its budget on website?

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* Post commission/board meeting dates and notes?

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This worksheet comes from the National Wildlife Federation’s Strengthening State Wildlife Agencies Toolkit, the first-ever toolkit for wildlife conservation leaders to strengthen state fish and wildlife agencies and reverse America’s wildlife crisis: <http://statewildlifetoolkit.nwf.org/>