



Virginia mallow

Chapter 8 Stakeholder and Public Participation

8.1 Stakeholder Participation

Stakeholders were initially engaged in the SWAP 2015 rewrite through the solicitation for and selection of individuals to participate as subject matter experts on technical committees for various taxa (avifauna, herpetofauna, mammals, and invertebrates) and habitats. A broad effort to contact and encourage participation was conducted by DOEE biologists, who have developed an extensive network of local partners and regional expertise since the development of the District's original SWAP in 2005. This enabled the process to draw from a large pool of knowledge, to expand the scope of conservation actions, and to fill data gaps. More than 40 organizations and individuals were represented on technical committees.

Technical committees began meeting in October 2014 and met as needed throughout the SGCN selection process. The committees played a key role by reviewing the SGCN ranking and selection process, offering opinions on species where data was lacking, assessing the threats to the finalized list of SGCN and habitats, and assisting in the development of specific conservation actions that would address those threats.



Dr. Jane Goodall and DOEE wildlife biologist Daniel Rauch observe a bald eagle nest at the USDA National Arboretum



Technical committees (see Table 33) consisted of biologists from the DOEE Fisheries and Wildlife Division and representatives from other federal, state, and local conservation agencies and organizations, as well as NGOs, including the following:

Federal

- National Park Service (NPS)
- US Geological Survey (USGS)
- US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- US Department of Agriculture

State

- Maryland Department of Natural Resources
- District Department of Health
- District of Columbia Cooperative Extension Service

Non-Governmental Organizations

- DC Audubon
- The Nature Conservancy
- Defenders of Wildlife
- Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA)
- Natural Heritage Program
- Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center
- American Bird Conservancy
- City Wildlife
- Anacostia Watershed Society
- Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
- The University of Maryland
- Howard University



- Smithsonian Mason School of Conservation
- George Washington University
- University of the District of Columbia

Table 33 Technical Committee Participants and their Affiliations

Avian Technical Committee – Dan Rauch (DOEE-FWD)	
Jason Berry	American Bird Conservancy
Alicia King	US Fish and Wildlife Service
Anne Lewis	City Wildlife
Hugh McGuinness	Maret School
James Monsma	City Wildlife
Paul Pisano	DC Avian Record Keeper
Robert Reitsma	Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center
Zack Slavin	DC Audubon
Robert Steele	National Park Service
Herpetofauna Technical Committee – Lindsay Rohrbaugh (DOEE-FWD)	
Thomas Akre	Smithsonian Mason School of Conservation
Scott Bates	National Park Service
Andrew Dietrich	U.S. Geological Survey - Patuxent
Ken Ferebee	National Park Service
Tasha Foreman	U.S. Geological Survey - Patuxent
Matthew Gallagher	Metropolitan Council of Governments
George Middendorf	Howard University
Mammal Technical Committee – Lindsay Rohrbaugh (DOEE-FWD)	
Scott Bates	National Park Service
Ken Ferebee	National Park Service
Susan Greeley	U.S. Department of Agriculture
Paula Goldberg	City Wildlife
Abby Hehmeyer	City Wildlife
Maria Hille	Department of Health
Jennifer Murrow	University of Maryland
Invertebrate Technical Committee – Damien Ossi (DOEE-FWD)	
David Culver	American University
Sam Droege	U.S. Geological Survey
Jennifer Frye	Maryland DNR
Natasha Garcia-Andersen	DOEE
Kenneth Hayes	Howard University
Richard Orr	Mid-Atlantic Invertebrate Field Studies, Inc.
Adam Smith	George Washington University



Fish Technical Committee – Shellie Spencer (DOEE-FWD)	
Mike Bailey	Angler
Vicki Blazer	US Geological Survey
Jorge Bogantes Montero	Anacostia Watershed Society
Steve Chaconas	Guide
Donavan Dean	Earth Conservation Corps
Martin Gary	Potomac River Fisheries Commission
Mary Groves	Maryland Dept. Natural Resources
Joseph Love	Maryland Dept. Natural Resources
Mikaila Milton	National Park Service
Steve Minkkinen	US Fish and Wildlife Service
Robert Nixon	Earth Conservation Corps
John Odenkirk	Virginia Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries
Matthew Ogburn	Smithsonian Environmental Research Center
Ken Penrod	Guide
Dave Secor	University of Maryland CES
Charlie Taylor	Angler/Retired Guide
Phong Trieu	Metropolitan Council of Governments
Robert West	Earth Conservation Corps
Habitat Technical Committee – Damien Ossi (DOEE-FWD)	
Ann Aldrich	Dumbarton Oaks Conservancy
Jorge Bogantes Montero	Anacostia Watershed Society
Mary Farrah	UDC Cooperative Extension Service
Joe Kish	National Park Service ROCR
Andrew Landsman	National Park Service CHOH
Mikaila Milton	National Park Service NACE
Alex Sanders	Rock Creek Conservancy
Geoff Sanders	National Park Service CUE

Stakeholder Meeting

Once a final draft was complete, there was a District wide stakeholder meeting to present the SWAP for review by all of the stakeholders who were involved in the creation of the SWAP, and others. The USFWS encouraged states to include partners and stakeholders as participants and leaders in relevant conservation actions. The meeting was held on July 28, 2015.



8.2 Public Participation



On July 31, 2015, DOEE published the draft SWAP 2015 in the *DC Register* and posted it on DOEE's website for a public comment period that lasted through September 7, 2015. DOEE conducted public meetings on August 5 and 6, 2015 to inform and educate residents on the District's biodiversity, the work of the DOEE's Fisheries and Wildlife Division, and key elements of SWAP 2015.

DOEE did outreach to publicize the meetings and solicit comments. DOEE sent a press release and announcements to residents who participated in DOEE's RiverSmart Homes Program (approximately 5,000 residents), DOEE's former Backyard Habitat Program (approximately 500 residents), and residents on the Sustainable DC email list (approximately 5000 residents). DOEE posted an announcement on 70 local email lists and Listserves, which reach approximately 78,000 residents. The announcement read as follows:

DDOE SEEKS PUBLIC INPUT ON DISTRICT'S WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN

WASHINGTON, DC, July 21, 2015—The District Department of the Environment (DDOE) announced today that it will host two community meetings in August to present updates to the District of Columbia's Wildlife Action Plan and to solicit comments from the public. In the 2015 update of the plan, DDOE assessed the District's wildlife and habitats, identified the threats and challenges they face, and described actions needed for conserving them.

Over the last two years, DDOE's Fisheries and Wildlife Division has worked with natural resource managers, academics, and other stakeholders to develop the 2015 District of Columbia Wildlife Action Plan. This plan is required to safeguard the District's eligibility for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's State Wildlife Grant Program funding. This federal program provides funding to ensure common wildlife species remain common and that rare species do not become endangered.

These community meetings will provide information to the public about species of conservation need, critical habitats for wildlife, threats to wildlife and habitats, and the conservation actions DDOE and its partners will be implementing. The meetings will also give the public an opportunity to meet, ask questions, and provide feedback to the Wildlife Action Plan development team.



“The District’s wildlife and natural areas are remarkable assets to our residents and visitors but they are impacted by numerous threats, many of which are unique to our urban setting,” said DDOE Director Tommy Wells. “The Wildlife Action Plan introduces creative ways to conserve and interact with the District’s wildlife from innovative citizen science programs, to creating meadow habitats along roadways, to propagating native plants for restoration projects and rain gardens. It provides the vision needed to ensure the District’s natural areas continue to be havens for wildlife and provide value into the future.”

WHAT: DDOE’s Wildlife Action Plan Community Meetings

*DATES: August 5 at the National Zoo Visitor Center Auditorium
3001 Connecticut Avenue NW | Metro: Woodley Park - Zoo*

*August 6 at DDOE’s Aquatic Resources Education Center
1500 Anacostia Drive SE | Metro: Minnesota Avenue or Anacostia*

TIMES: Open-house style from 6:30 to 8:00pm with a presentation from 6:45 to 7:15pm.

NOTE: Both meetings are designed to be similar in scope. Meetings are open to the public and no RSVP is required.

DOEE also requested that stakeholder groups assist with outreach for the public meetings and comment period by encouraging their members to participate in the public meetings and comment on the draft. The public were invited to submit comments at the public meetings or by email. Public involvement will continue through citizen science projects, and outreach and education, and other public events as described in Chapter 6.

DOEE received comments from numerous residents and stakeholder organizations. DOEE received a total of 291 comments from residents and stakeholder organizations, and nearly 12,000 form letters (Table 34). DOEE reviewed and addressed all comments. DOEE received comprehensive comments from seven residents and thirteen stakeholder organizations, including NPS, AWS, Rock Creek Conservancy, American Bird Conservancy, Biophilic DC, Casey Trees, Committee of 100 on the Federal City, City Wildlife, Capitol Hill Restoration Society, Audubon Society of the District of Columbia, Friends of Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens, and The Nature Conservancy of MD/DC. Comments that resulted in changes to the draft SWAP 2015 are included with DOEE’s responses in Appendix G.

Additionally, on September 4, 2015, the Committee on Transportation & the Environment of the Council of the District of Columbia published notice of intent to hold a Public Roundtable on the “Draft 2015 District of Columbia Wildlife Plan”, and DOEE published a notice to extend the public comment period of SWAP 2015 to include testimony from the hearing:



DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT
NOTICE OF EXTENDED PUBLIC COMMENT
2015 District of Columbia Wildlife Action Plan

On August 7, 2015 the Department of Energy and Environment (the Department) published notice of its intent to solicit comments from the public on the District of Columbia Wildlife Action Plan. The Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act of 2002 (Title I, Public Law 107-63) directs all states and the District of Columbia to update their Wildlife Action Plan every ten years and to make this plan available for public review and comment. In accordance with this requirement, the Department developed and published a draft District of Columbia Wildlife Action Plan for a 30-day public comment between August 7, 2015 and September 7, 2015.

On September 4, 2015, the Committee on Transportation & the Environment of the Council of the District of Columbia (the Committee) published notice of intent to hold a Public Roundtable on the "Draft 2015 District of Columbia Wildlife Plan". The Department is committed to considering any unique comments not already presented during the Department's public comment process while finalizing this Plan and will incorporate the testimony and record generated by the Public Roundtable to the extent that it provides new substantive information.

Please contact the Committee to ascertain their rules for submitting testimony and comments. Contact information is as follows: Aukima Benjamin, staff assistant to the Committee on Transportation and the Environment, John A. Wilson Building, 1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Suite 108, Washington, DC 20004 or abenjamin@dccouncil.us. The Committee's record will close at the end of the business day on September 21, 2015.

A summary of the witnesses, testimony and DOEE's Responses to the testimony presented at the hearing are included in Appendix G.

Table 34 Summary of public comments and testimony for SWAP 2015

Comment Category	Comprehensive Comments	Cat-specific Comments	Total
Public Comment Period			
Resident comments	7	260	267
Stakeholder comments	13	11	24
Form letters	0	11,937	11,937
Hearing			
Resident Testimony	0	15	15
Stakeholder testimony	11	9	20
Government witnesses	3	N/A	3
Written testimony	9	29	38
Additional comments	3	66	69
Total Comments			12,373



8.3 Successes of SWAP 2005



SWAP 2005 was, for the most part, an inventory and monitoring plan. Since 2006, more than 1 million individual records of species occurrence have been collected by DOEE biologists for terrestrial and aquatic species in the District. This data set was the main resource for species analysis and development of the SWAP 2015 SGCN list.

SWAP was also a document for conservation in the District as a whole and allowed for strong partnerships to be developed between a number of federal, state, national, regional, and local organizations. Partner agencies and organizations were responsible for a number of conservation actions, such as AWS, NPS, USGS, USFWS, and DOEE restoring 5 acres of tidal wetlands in Kenilworth, Kingman, and Heritage marshes. ECC, USFWS, and DOEE tracked two male ospreys breeding in the District with GPS devices during migration. DOEE and the University of Maryland started an environmental science internship and, for the last six years, DOEE has participated in an exchange program with Brazilian university students pursuing science careers. DOEE, NPS, Living Classrooms DC, MD/DC Chapter of the Nature Conservancy, and AWS have coordinated on a number of invasive plant removal and native plant restoration programs to enhance wildlife habitat.

To promote SWAP 2005 and wildlife in the District, DOEE utilized print, media, social media, environmental education programs, environmental fairs, lectures, and other public outreach avenues.

The following are examples of successful natural resource management programs conducted under SWAP 2005.

Radio-telemetry of relocated eastern box turtles in the District of Columbia

Terrapene carolina carolina (eastern box turtle), once a fairly common species, is declining in its range throughout North America, primarily due to habitat loss and destruction. NatureServe assigned the eastern box turtle a rating of S3, or vulnerable, in the District. The eastern box turtle was listed as an SGCN in SWAP 2005 and is identified as an SGCN in SWAP 2015.

The recent approval of a large-scale development project threatened a community of eastern box turtles. To conserve this particular population, ten individuals were relocated to suitable habitats within the District. However, given the nature of eastern



box turtles to use homing instincts, long-term monitoring is required after the relocation. To monitor the success of this effort, turtles were fitted with radio-transmitters and have been tracked by DOEE biologists since May 2011. In addition to conserving the population in question, this project will produce data regarding the effectiveness of turtle relocation as pertains to movement patterns and home range reestablishment.

Knowing the effects that relocation has on new home range establishment will allow conservationists to implement best management practices in accordance with SWAP 2015, which will further ensure the survivability of current and future turtle populations. Additionally, data collected from this effort will continue to document some of the effects that urbanization has on turtles, their movements, and their survivability.

As of July 2014, six turtles remained fitted with transmitters. In 2014–2015, two of the transmitters failed, one turtle succumbed to ranavirus, and there was one fatality due to a vehicle collision. By 2014, all but one turtle had stopped homing and settled, while the final turtle demonstrating homing instincts was hit by a car in 2015.

American Shad Restoration in the District of Columbia

In 2004, DOEE began a restoration project focused on creating a spawning stock of American shad in the Anacostia River. Since that time more than 8 million chemically marked yolk sac fry have been stocked in the District's portion of the Anacostia. While no adult American shad have been observed in the Anacostia River there has been an increase in American shad encountered in various fisheries surveys in the District's portion of the Potomac River. In order to better understand the shad population structure within the District DOEE performs an adult American shad gillnet survey accompanied by otolith analysis. The analysis of this data allows DOEE to assess restoration efforts by determining the percentage of hatchery reared American shad versus wild fish. In conjunction with the adult American shad survey a push net survey is conducted in the District to obtain juvenile American shad. All otoliths of juvenile American shad caught in push net survey are analyzed for the presence of an OTC mark. This allows DOEE to determine percent of hatchery juvenile American shad to wild American shad.

In 2014 DOEE biologists were able to examine all of the otoliths collected in the adult gill net survey. No OTC marks were found on the 17 readable samples, indicating only wild spawned American shad were captured in the 2014 gill netting survey. To date, no hatchery spawned American shad have been found in the gill netting survey. DOEE biologists examined all of the juvenile American shad captured during the push net survey in the Anacostia River in 2014. This sample included 164 juvenile fish of which 3 were determined to be of hatchery origin. These figures indicate that 1.8% of the juvenile American shad population in the Anacostia River in 2014 were DOEE's hatchery contribution.

Bat Species Inventory and WNS in the District

As a whole, bats are an understudied and underappreciated order of animals. White-nose Syndrome (WNS) has been decimating bat colonies throughout the eastern United



States since 2007. WNS has been documented in both Maryland and Virginia, so it is crucial that DOEE has been conducting surveys related to bats such as acoustical monitoring (via Anabat to capture the echolocation of the bats flying overhead) and mist-netting. Eight species have been identified in the District. Of particular interest is the northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*). The USFWS listed this species as federally threatened in May 2015. DOEE will continue to work with bats and WNS in under SWAP 2015.

Invasive Plant Management Coordination in the District

The District of Columbia Cooperative Weed Management Area (DC-CWMA) is a partnership of local and federal agencies, conservation organizations, and academic institutions who work cooperatively to coordinate invasive plant management across political and ecological boundaries in the District. The goal of the DC-CWMA is to coordinate invasive plant management across political and ecological boundaries in the District, to protect biodiversity and restore wildlife habitat, to raise public awareness of the threats posed by invasive plants, and to share data and management techniques.

The members include the District Departments of the Environment (DOEE) and Transportation, National Park Service (five units: Center for Urban Ecology, Rock Creek Park, C&O Canal Historical Park, George Washington Memorial Parkway, and National Capital Parks-East), Anacostia Watershed Society (AWS), Rock Creek Conservancy, University of the District of Columbia-Cooperative Extension Service (UDC), Casey Tree Foundation, and Washington Parks & People. Other partners include the Student Conservation Association (SCA), USDA National Arboretum, U.S. Botanic Gardens, Dumbarton Oaks Conservancy, Friends of Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens, Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, Living Classrooms of DC, Anacostia Riverkeeper, Little Falls Watershed Alliance, MD/DC Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, DC Chapter of the MD Native Plant Society, and Department of the Navy.

The DC-CWMA began activities in 2009 and reached current membership in 2013. Activities included cooperation and assistance between members to implement specific invasive plant management projects and volunteer events. For instance, in the fall of 2009 and 2010 DOEE assisted TNC and NPS to manage tree-of-heaven along Canal Road, and DOEE has assisted NPS in managing phragmites at Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens for five years. Recent projects include three summer work crews (summer 2012, 2013 and 2014), managed by DOEE, performing invasive plant management projects planned by DC-CWMA members. In 2015 the crew targeted 26 different invasive plant species and performed on-the-ground management on 68 acres of wildlife habitat.

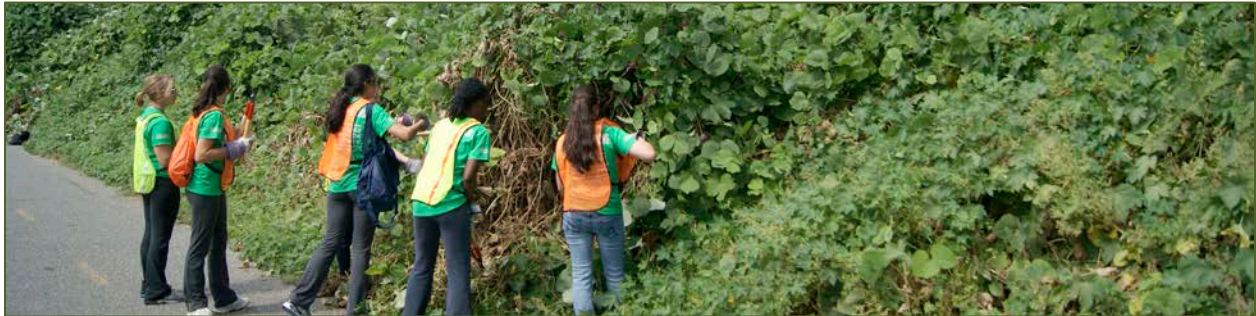
The DC-CWMA has had significant interaction with both land managers and the public. Since 2012 the DC-CWMA has held five integrated pest management training workshops in partnership with NPS. These one-day workshops have offered recertification credits for certified pesticide applicators in four states and the District. DC-CWMA partners UDC, NPS, DOEE, and Casey Trees hold invasive plant training classes twice annually to train volunteers for Rock Creek Park's Weed Warrior program. The DC-CWMA has also trained Weed Warriors for Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens and Fort



Dupont Park. The DC-CWMA has planned and hosted numerous invasive plant volunteer events, including large multi-partner events such as the Mid-Atlantic Invasive Plant Removal Day, and an annual fall event with the George Washington University's Freshmen Day of Service.

The DC-CWMA continue under SWAP 2015 to search for opportunities to expand its capacity, ability, and influence to implement invasive plant management, habitat restoration, education, and local policy.

8.4 Implementation



The District is a complex puzzle of multiple federal jurisdictions, fragmented land ownership, and shared river systems, bracketed by neighboring states. Implementation of the SWAP will depend on the strength and coordination of partnerships between a variety of agencies and organizations. Conservation actions will be more effective when they are part of a coordinated effort to accomplish defined goals.

DOEE will work to integrate SWAP 2015 into updates of the District's Comprehensive Plan, the Sustainable DC Plan, climate change resiliency planning, and other plans. DOEE will partner with DDOT, DCOP, DPW, DPR, and other sister agencies to integrate the goals, issues and actions of SWAP 2015 into any master plans or local area plans to ensure that future impacts to wildlife are minimized.

The SWAP will be implemented by the DOEE and stakeholder organizations, which have been essential to the implementation of SWAP 2005, and were essential in the development of this document. Successful implementation will depend on coordination and partnerships between a variety of agencies and organizations.

