

Workshop to Explore Opportunities to Integrate the State Wildlife Action Plans into Improved Wetland Conservation and Restoration

Background

In 2001, Congress created the Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program and State Wildlife Grants Program to prevent wildlife from becoming endangered. As part of the effort, each state and territory developed a wildlife action plan to proactively conserve wildlife and critical habitat. Every state and territory submitted their plan to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service for review and approval in October 2005. The development of the 56 state wildlife action plans is marshalling habitat conservation information to an extent unmatched by any prior planning effort. The plans have tremendous potential to inform and support conservation action in many areas, including wetlands conservation. However, with few exceptions, state wetland program managers are largely unaware of the wildlife action plans as a potentially powerful resource, or do not have a clear sense of how existing policies and programs can guide regulatory and non-regulatory decision-making, while supporting statewide conservation goals.

Purpose & Goals

In partnership with the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and Association of State Wetland Managers, the Environmental Law Institute (ELI) will convene approximately 40 diverse stakeholders involved in state wetland and wildlife program administration for a two-day workshop in Washington, DC in July 2007. The goal of the workshop is to advance state wetland conservation, research, and management activities by identifying opportunities for state wetland programs to utilize the wildlife action plans in regulatory and non-regulatory decision-making. Funding is generously provided by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The specific goals of this workshop are to:

- Improve knowledge among state wetland program staff of the state wildlife action plans.
- Improve knowledge among state wildlife program staff of existing state wetland programs and activities.
- Identify shared opportunities to support wetlands conservation among state wetland and wildlife programs, including:
 - How existing wetland programs might be harnessed to support implementation of the wildlife action plans, and
 - How wildlife action plans can be used to guide and enhance non-regulatory decision-making among state wetland programs, as well as to improve or better inform existing regulatory decision-making among state wetland programs.

ELI will produce a final report based on the days' discussions and findings.