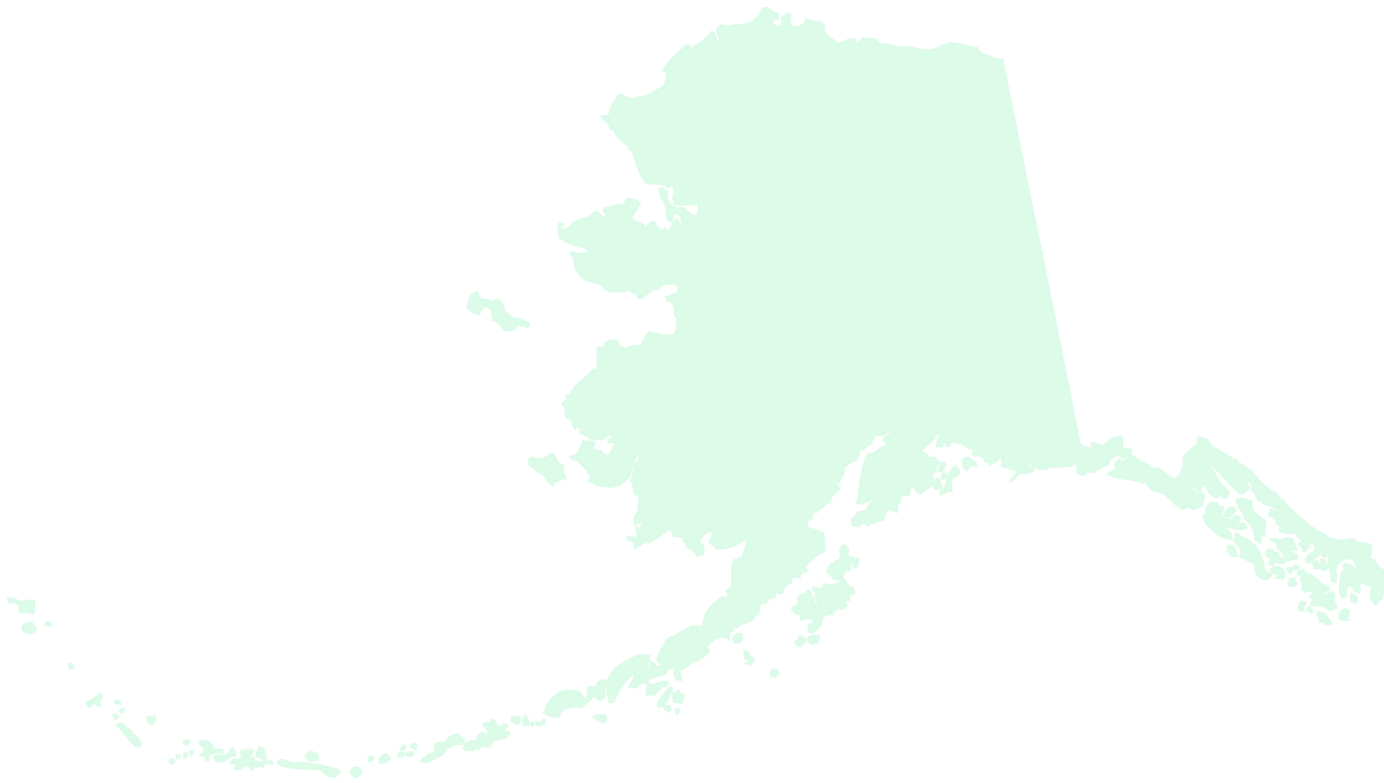


2025 ALASKA WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN

A 10-year plan for managing fish and wildlife species and their habitats to help avoid listings under the Endangered Species Act



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Alaska Department of Fish and Game
PO Box 115526
Juneau, Alaska 99811-5526

This plan identifies the wildlife species and habitats in greatest conservation need in Alaska, key threats to those species, and conservation actions needed to ensure their populations are healthy into the future. Congress mandated that state fish and wildlife agencies develop the plans to receive federal funding through the State Wildlife Grants Program. This document is that plan. If higher resolution images of the maps and photos presented in this State Wildlife Action Plan are desired, the reader can download separate, higher resolution copies of all chapters.

Cover: Clockwise from top left: Rufous Hummingbird, A. Underwood, ADF&G; Arctic ground squirrel, A. Underwood, ADF&G; bee on Sitka valerian flower, A. Underwood, ADF&G; Golden Eagle, R. Bartz, Wikimedia Commons; northern sea otter, M. Baird; sunflower sea star, ABR; Tree Swallow, A. Underwood, ADF&G; Tiger Rockfish, R. Ragan; Pacific walrus, A. Underwood, ADF&G; Lesser Yellowlegs, ADF&G; Mt. Hayes, Alaska Range, K. Titus, ADF&G.

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Please cite as

Alaska Department of Fish and Game. 2025. Alaska wildlife action plan. Division of Wildlife Conservation, Juneau.

Executive Summary



Dwarf fireweed on the Stikine River, Shakes Slough. ADF&G.

Alaska's State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) serves as a framework for prioritizing fish and wildlife conservation efforts and is required for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) to remain eligible for United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) funding under the State Wildlife Grants (SWG) program. The U.S. Congress created the SWG program in 2000 to provide essential conservation funding to every state and territory to proactively reduce the need for Endangered Species Act (ESA) listings of the nation's fish and wildlife. ADF&G receives approximately \$2.7 million per year in federal funding from the SWG program and is required to provide nonfederal matching funds at a rate of 35% of the total project costs. This funding helps ADF&G reduce inappropriate, expensive, or prescriptive regulatory burdens of the ESA. The 2025 SWAP fulfills the congressionally mandated 10-year "major revision" requirement of the SWG program. ADF&G developed the 2025 SWAP with input from conservation partners and the public to function as a living document to guide fish and wildlife conservation efforts in Alaska over the next 10 years.

The Alaska SWAP is framed by the Alaska Constitution (Art. VIII) and ADF&G's mission, both of which emphasize the compatibility of long-term natural resource use and fish and wildlife conservation under the sustained yield principle. SWG funds help Alaska maintain robust populations of fish and wildlife, while the state's existing legal frameworks on natural resource use and development address localized impacts. Examples include multiple statutes and regulations to conserve and manage anadromous waters (e.g., Fishway Act, AS 16.05.841; Anadromous Fish Act, AS 16.05.871-

.901; Anadromous Waters Catalog, 5 AAC 95.011), which promote the long-term sustained yield of anadromous fish, such as salmon.

Alaska's 2025 SWAP creates opportunities for collaboration between agencies, conservation organizations, and the public in proactive, voluntary efforts to conserve fish and wildlife species while supporting sustainable natural resource use that benefits all Alaskans. The following objectives form the foundation of this plan:

- Avoid the need for future ESA listings.
- Maintain state-led management authority for Alaska's fish and wildlife.
- Manage Alaska's fish and wildlife according to the sustained yield principle to ensure they can be used and enjoyed by future generations.
- Provide for maximum natural resource use to benefit Alaskans.
- Maintain management flexibility to enable timely responses to emerging threats to fish and wildlife.
- Sustain healthy, functioning ecosystems.
- Increase public engagement in fish and wildlife conservation.
- Foster partnerships to leverage available resources for conservation.

SWG funding can be spent on research, monitoring, habitat assessments, conservation actions, and planning activities that benefit "species of greatest conservation need," or SGCN, and their habitats. The SWAP describes the selection process for SGCN, including our use of the Alaska Species Ranking System (ASRS), and the basis for inclusion on the resulting SGCN list, which includes 266 vertebrate species, one rockfish genus, nine invertebrate species, and 17 invertebrate taxa. The broad scope of the SGCN list enables timely responses to emerging issues that mitigate impacts, reverse declines, and fill knowledge gaps before species become imperiled, reducing the need for ESA listings.

Throughout the SWAP we refer to nine biogeographic regions, which reflect areas of Alaska's land and waters that have similar ecological and environmental characteristics. These biogeographic regions are the foundation for our description of 33 terrestrial and freshwater habitats using the U.S. National Vegetation Classification (USNVC) and the occurrence of SGCN within each habitat in each biogeographic region. The use of this national standard promotes consistent habitat classification and supports interagency collaboration on efforts to monitor changes in wildlife habitat over time and to manage broad-scale threats such as invasive species introductions.

We organize our summary of the potential threats to Alaska's fish and wildlife using the Conservation Measures Partnership Direct Threats Classification. Most of these potential threats are not expected to have population-level impacts on fish and wildlife in Alaska, due to their small spatial scale relative to the amount of undisturbed habitat, the large extent of land already managed for fish and wildlife conservation across the state, and existing adequate regulatory mechanisms to ensure that development and other human activities are compatible with fish and wildlife conservation. By contrast, threats that affect fish and wildlife at broad scales are more likely to result in petitions to list species as threatened or endangered, which the 2025 SWAP aims to reduce. Of particular concern for some SGCN are broad-scale threats like invasive species introductions, and environmental changes resulting in diminished sea ice, melting permafrost, and ocean acidification.

The SWAP describes Alaska's priorities for fish and wildlife conservation over the next decade, which are intended as general or strategic guidance. Budgets, staff capacity, partnerships, emerging conservation and management needs, and cost-benefit analyses also drive annual decisions on what specific research, monitoring, and planning projects ADF&G conducts. Highest priority is currently assigned to SGCN for which Alaska has high stewardship responsibility due to a large percentage of a species' population or range occurring in the state, and for which there is a documented conservation concern, such as a known population decline. The SWAP also identifies several priority habitats experiencing rapid environmental change (e.g., sea ice, tundra), as well as areas and habitats where multiple SGCN co-occur, enabling managers to prioritize limited resources and develop practical, solution-oriented conservation strategies.

High-priority conservation actions in Alaska include research and monitoring efforts that identify drivers of decline, promote partnerships, and implement effective and achievable projects to mitigate threats and ensure sustained yield of SGCN. Alaska's SGCN are among the least studied populations in North America, therefore, quantifying population size, rate of population change, habitat use, reproduction, and migratory movements are important conservation actions. Such data help identify which species are resilient



K. Christie, ADF&G biologist, scanning the mudflats for Red Knots. A. Underwood, ADF&G.



Gulls on open water. ADF&G.



Hubbard Glacier. ADF&G.

to broad-scale environmental change and which may require further conservation actions to support their resilience. Migration data have the added benefit of highlighting opportunities for partnerships outside the state to ensure breeding individuals return to Alaska by implementing conservation and management actions throughout a species' annual life cycle (e.g., restoring habitat along the migratory path, reducing stressors on the wintering grounds).

Overall, Alaska has ecologically intact habitats and abundant wildlife populations due to its expansive size, rugged and remote location, small human population, adequate existing regulations, and constitutional sustained yield mandate. The 2025 SWAP, developed with input from conservation partners and the public, will continue to provide the strategic guidance necessary over the next decade to help ensure Alaska's fish and wildlife populations remain diverse and abundant.



Double rainbow over fields at McNeil River State Game Sanctuary. ADF&G.

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Foreword



Brooks Range. © M. Emery, used with permission.

Alaska is home to an incredible diversity of fish and wildlife species, many of which are unique to our great state. These species are foundationally important to our ecosystems and many are valued commercially, recreationally, and culturally.

The founders of our Alaska constitution wisely recognized the importance of sustaining these resources for future generations. They embedded into the constitution, yes our constitution, a requirement for common use of these resources and to sustainably manage them under the sustained yield principle. We take this responsibility seriously.

Based on this, Alaska has developed a robust management program that ensures the conservation of our fish and wildlife and their habitats. And we have been successful in our efforts. Our resource management programs are recognized as some of the best in the world.

I want to highlight the word “conservation.” Our programs are not built on “protection,” rather conservation of our resources, recognizing that wise use is an element of our management. People are part of the equation. This is our home, and we take pride in caring for it.

Alaska’s State Wildlife Action Plan is a conservation plan for those species that we have identified as species needing focus. It is not a suggestion that these species are critically imperiled and need to be listed under the Endangered Species Act, rather it is a blueprint to identify threats facing these species and their habitats to sustain and conserve them for future generations.

I want to thank my staff and all those that contributed to this plan, recognizing that it is a living document that will evolve over time.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game is entrusted to be good stewards of our resources. But conservation is a team effort. We are in this together.

—Doug Vincent-Lang, Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Acknowledgments

This document reflects the work of many individuals and organizations who contributed at every stage of its development—from coordination and writing to data analysis, stakeholder engagement, and production. We extend our sincere gratitude to all who participated in this effort.

ADF&G STAFF AND LEADERSHIP

Development of this revised action plan was coordinated by Julie Hagelin, Division of Wildlife Conservation, and Kristine Dunker, Division of Sport Fish, both within the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G). They were assisted by staff of the Division of Wildlife Conservation's Threatened, Endangered, and Diversity (TED) Program, including Lindsey Nietmann (program coordinator), Eva Allaby, Travis Booms, Karen Blejwas, Katie Christie, Moira Ingle, Jenell Larsen Tempel, Mykenzee Munaco, Tory Rhoads, Arin Underwood, and Jeff Wagner, as well as former staff who initiated the revision (Tracey Gotthardt, Audrey Taylor). The Division of Sport Fish Research (Jeff Nichols, Tim McKinley, James Savereide) and Invasive Species (Tammy Davis) programs also contributed to this document, as did the Division of Subsistence (Liliana Naves). Additional input was received from many sources within ADF&G's Division of Wildlife Conservation, including research biologist Chris Barger, the Waterfowl Program (Jason Chamber, Tyler Lewis), the Marine Mammal Program (Lori Polasik, Lori Quakenbush), the Small Game Program (Cameron Carroll) and ADF&G leadership (Chris Krenz, Ryan Scott, Sky Brandt, Israel Payton, Lisa Holt-Blair, Forrest Bowers, Rachel Baker, Dani Evenson). June Younkins (ADF&G Publications) improved the clarity of writing and formatting.

CONTRACTORS, EXTERNAL PARTNERS, AND THE PUBLIC

Alaska Biological Research (ABR), Inc. (Rebecca McGuire, Lauren Attenas, Tim Obritschkewitsch, Pam Odom, Terry Schick) was instrumental in all aspects of the revision process, assisting with initial drafts and extensive editing, through to the final, formatted document. ABR also compiled SGCN species data by vegetation type and biogeographic region for Chapter 6 (Key Habitats for Wildlife in Alaska). Innovative Outcomes (Cynthia Jacobson, Daniel Decker, Meghan Baumer, Caly Means) conducted numerous interviews during the revision process with a range of fish and wildlife stakeholders (e.g., consumptive and recreational user groups, Alaska Native entities), as well as partner agencies and organizations. Innovative Outcomes also designed and compiled data from an online survey during public review, and drafted text that significantly contributed to Chapter 11 (Plan Development, Implementation and Review). Alaska Center for Conservation Science (ACCS) helped with species ranks during development of the SGCN list (Kassie Colson, Amanda Droghini), created detailed habitat descriptions and maps (Lindsey Flagstad, Julie Polasik), and provided expertise on pollinators (Matt Carlson). Andy Baltensperger (University of Alaska Fairbanks International Arctic Research Center) assisted with statewide SGCN heatmaps and spatial analysis. University of Alaska Museum of the North provided taxonomic and species expertise (Derek Sikes, Link Olson, Kevin Winker, Jack Withrow), as did U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) biologists (Robert Kahler, Heather Renner, Richard Lanctot, Brie Drummond). U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Climate Adaptation Science Center (AKCASC) provided climate summary data and information. Cheryl Clark Consulting assisted with updating text for Chapters 3 (Alaska Overview) and Chapter 5 (Distribution and Abundance of Wildlife in Alaska). USFWS Office of Conservation Investment (John Warzybok) provided helpful guidance and support throughout the revision process. Appreciation is also extended to the scores of individuals, state and federal agencies, user groups, Tribal entities, nongovernmental organizations, industry professionals, species-specialist groups, and the public who offered thoughtful review and suggestions during the planning and revision process. Finally, we are grateful to the many photographers who contributed images to the plan or placed them in the public domain.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ABR	ABR, Inc.—Environmental Research & Services
ABRT	Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force
ACAC	Alaska Copper Ammo Challenge
ACAD	Avian Conservation Assessment Database
ACCS	Alaska Center for Conservation Science
ACUASI	Alaska Center for Unmanned Aerial System Integration (UAF program)
ADEC	Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation
ADF&G	Alaska Department of Fish and Game
ADR	Alaska Department of Revenue
AEA	Alaska Energy Authority
AFFF	Aqueous Film Forming Foam
AFWA	Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
AKRDC	Alaska Resource Development Council
AKRR	Alaska Railroad
ALMS	Alaska Landbird Monitoring Surveys
AMA	Alaska Miners Association
AMBCC	Alaska Migratory Bird Co-Management Council
APHIS	Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
ARC	Alaska Research Consortium
ASA	American Sportfishing Association
ASC	Alaska Science Center
ASCE	American Society of Civil Engineers
ASG	Alaska Shorebird Group
ASRS	Alaska Species Ranking System
ATBA	Areas to be avoided
ATIA	Alaska Travel Industry Association
BCC	Birds of Conservation Concern
BCI	Bat Conservation International
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
BOEM	Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
BPIF	Boreal Partners in Flight
C3S	Copernicus Climate Change Service
CMP	Conservation Measures Partnership
CO ₂	Carbon dioxide
DNR	Alaska Department of Natural Resources
DOF	Alaska Division of Forestry and Fire Protection
DOLWD	Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development
DOT&PF	Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
DPS	Distinct population segment
EFH	Essential fish habitat
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
ESA	Endangered Species Act
EVT	Existing vegetation type
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
FGDC	Federal Geographic Data Committee

Acronyms and Abbreviations (continued)

FRPA	Forest Resources Protection Act
FUDS	Formerly Used Defense Sites (managed by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers)
GAP	U.S. Geological Survey Gap Analysis Project
GDP	Gross domestic product
HAB	Harmful algal bloom
HPAI	Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza
IARC	International Arctic Research Center
IBA	Important Bird Area
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
JPARC	Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex
MG	McDowell Group
MMC	Marine Mammal Commission
MRG	McKinley Research Group
NABCI	North American Bird Conservation Initiative
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
NMFS	National Marine Fisheries Service
NOAA	National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration
NPAFC	North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission
NPFMC	North Pacific Fishery Management Council
NPR-A	National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska
NPS	National Park Service
NRCS	National Resources Conservation Service
OCI	Office of Conservation Investment
PAME	Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (Arctic Council Working Group Program)
PCB	Polychlorinated biphenyls
PFAS	Polyfluoroalkyl substances
PRISM	Program for Regional and International Shorebird Monitoring
SGCN	Species of greatest conservation need
SNAP	Scenarios Network for Alaska + Arctic Planning (UAF program)
SWAP	State Wildlife Action Plan
SWG	State Wildlife Grant
TED	Threatened, Endangered, and Diversity (ADF&G program)
UAF	University of Alaska Fairbanks
UAS	Unmanned aerial system
USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
USBEA	U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis
USCB	U.S. Census Bureau
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
USEIA	U.S. Energy Information Administration
USFS	U.S. Forest Service
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
USGS	U.S. Geological Survey
USNVC	U.S. National Vegetation Classification
WHESAP	Wildlife Habitat Enhancement and Spatial Analysis Program (ADF&G program)
WNS	White-nose syndrome
