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March 17, April 28, & May 12, 2026, 12 p.m. ET, 11 a.m. CT, 10 a.m. MT, 9 a.m. PT

Recovering America's Wildlife through 25 Years of State Wildlife Action Plans: The Evolution of Their Science and Implementation

Sunny Fleming, Director – Conservation Solutions, Esri
Naomi Edelson, Senior Director, National Wildlife Federation
John Kanter, Senior Wildlife Biologist, National Wildlife Federation
Georgia Department of Natural Resources



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Over the past 25 years, State Wildlife Action Plans have evolved from foundational blueprints into comprehensive, science-based strategies that address a broader range of species, regional priorities, and conservation challenges. Since the establishment of the State Wildlife Grants program in 2000, every state has updated its plan on a regular cycle, with the most recent revisions completed in 2025.

In parallel, the GIS tools supporting these efforts have transformed how conservation work is planned, implemented, and communicated. Bringing State Wildlife Action Plans from strategy to action depends on collaboration among diverse partners and stakeholders. Modern Web GIS supports this work through shared data, visualization, and storytelling, using tools such as StoryMaps, Dashboards, and ArcGIS Hubs to communicate complex science and policy in clear and compelling ways.

This webinar series explores how advances in conservation science, policy, and spatial technology collectively shape today's State Wildlife Action Plans. Participants will hear from state agency biologists and practitioners and will learn best practices for connecting expanded biological scope with holistic GIS strategies to support implementation, collaboration, and communication.

March 17, 2026 - The first webinar in the series will consider the evolution of State Wildlife Action Plans and a greater need for collaboration across ecosystems and how GIS has and can continue to contribute to advancing communication, data collection, and demonstrating the impact.

Presenters:

Sunny Fleming, Director - Conservation Solutions, Esri
John Kanter, Senior Wildlife Biologist, National Wildlife Federation

April 28, 2026 - Since the establishment of the State Wildlife Grants program in 2000, every state in the nation has created a blueprint of conservation actions for wildlife. These State Wildlife Action Plans are required to be updated every ten years with October 2025 the most recent version. Leading state agency biologists will share an overview showcasing the inclusion of plants, insects, and regional priorities to ensure recovering the full diversity of flora and fauna, and how you can support the implementation of your state's action plan.

Presenters:

Naomi Edelson, Senior Director, National Wildlife Federation
John Kanter, Senior Wildlife Biologist, National Wildlife Federation

May 12, 2026 - The third webinar will feature your peers who are using Esri's GIS tools to support planning efforts such as State Wildlife Action Plans. Modern Web GIS supports this work through shared data, visualization, and storytelling, using tools such as StoryMaps, Dashboards, and ArcGIS Hubs to communicate complex science and policy in clear and compelling ways. This program is practical and applied, offering real-world insights you can apply to your own work.

Presenters:

Sunny Fleming, Director - Conservation Solutions, Esri
Georgia Department of Natural Resources - Case Study Presenters: Brett Albanese, Ph.D., Assistant Chief, Wildlife Conservation Section & State Wildlife Action Plan Coordinator, Liz Morata, GIS Analyst, and Dylan Severans, GIS Specialist



Brett Albanese, Ph.D., Assistant Chief, Wildlife Conservation Section & State Wildlife Action Plan Coordinator, Georgia Department of Natural Resources

With a background in plant ecology and botany, Sunny Fleming has applied location intelligence throughout her career; from monitoring species in the field to helping state parks manage recreational assets across their systems. She continues to pursue her passion for the environment by now supporting others in applying location intelligence to their work.



Sunny Fleming, Director - Conservation Solutions, Esri

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Naomi Edelson, Senior Director, National Wildlife Federation

Naomi is an inspirational leader in the wildlife conservation community who is gifted at building movements of people inspired to action. She is respected for convening coalitions and motivating teams for success, as well as being an innovator in the field, creating new practical tools and expert guidance. As Senior Director for Wildlife Partnerships at National Wildlife Federation, she leads their partnerships with state wildlife agencies and other state-based partners to secure greater funding and support to prevent wildlife from becoming endangered. On the federal side this includes the Recovering America's Wildlife Act campaign (www.nwf.org/recoveringamericaswildlife). Before working with NWF, Naomi raised more than \$1 billion U.S. dollars in new conservation funding through her work as the Teaming with Wildlife Director at the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. She initiated and directed all aspects of Teaming with Wildlife, a national grassroots coalition of more than 6,000 groups focused on securing federal funding for state-level wildlife conservation. It is this effort that led to the establishment of the State Wildlife Action Plans and State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program.



John Kanter, CWB®, Senior Wildlife Biologist, National Wildlife Federation

With over 30 years of experience, John works to ensure that NWF programs reflect the best available science and latest practices in wildlife biology and management. Prior to joining NWF in 2017, John worked for 25 years at New Hampshire Fish and Game Department where he developed the state's nongame and endangered wildlife section, growing it from a one-person program to a team of 10 biologists. By applying sound science and establishing effective public-private partnerships, his team restored populations of the Karner blue butterfly, roseate tern, Blanding's turtle, New England cottontail and other at-risk species. As past chair and member of the Northeast Wildlife Diversity Technical Committee, John helped to establish the Northeast Regional Conservation Needs Grant program, which funded several multi-state conservation efforts aimed at preventing species from needing federal listing.



Liz Morata, GIS Analyst, Georgia Department of Natural Resources

Liz Morata is a wildlife biologist who specializes in spatial ecology and animal movement, currently working as a GIS analyst with the Georgia DNR Wildlife Conservation Section. She uses maps, data, and field experience to support conservation planning, wildlife monitoring, and statewide wildlife management efforts.



Dylan Severens, GIS Specialist, Georgia Department of Natural Resources

Dylan Severens has been with DNR since 2016, first as a GIS specialist for the fisheries section and later as supervisor for the GIS Team. He participates in most traditional outdoor activities and has a newfound interest in gardening.