

# How Parks Can Take Action in State Wildlife Plans

October 26, 2021

*This learning event will begin shortly.*



NATIONAL  
RECREATION AND PARK  
ASSOCIATION



# How Parks Can Take Action in State Wildlife Plans

- *Please ask questions and join in the discussion with your colleagues via the webinar chat box. There will be a dedicated time for Q&A after the presentation has concluded.*
- *Continue the discussions from this event on the NRPA Education forum on NRPA Connect.*
- *The slides, recording, and any other resources from this presentation will be added to your NRPA Online Learning dashboards within 24 hours after this event concludes.*

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## Introductions



**Ayanna Williams,  
MSW**

(she/her/hers)  
Director of Community and  
Environmental Resilience,  
National Recreation and Park  
Association



**Naomi Edelson**

(she/her/hers)  
Senior Director, Wildlife Partnerships  
National Wildlife Federation



**Richard Heilbrun**

(he/him/his)  
Urban Wildlife Program Leader  
Texas Parks & Wildlife Department

## How Parks Can Take Action in State Wildlife Plans

# How Parks Can Take Action in State Wildlife Plans

- Naomi Edelson, National Wildlife Federation
- Richard Heilbrun, Texas Park & Wildlife Department
- Ayanna Williams, NRPA



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# America's wildlife are at risk

- **1/3** of species at risk of extinction
- **1,600** species listed under ESA
- **12,000+** Species of Greatest Conservation Need



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**About 42%  
Amphibians declining  
Salamanders = USA**

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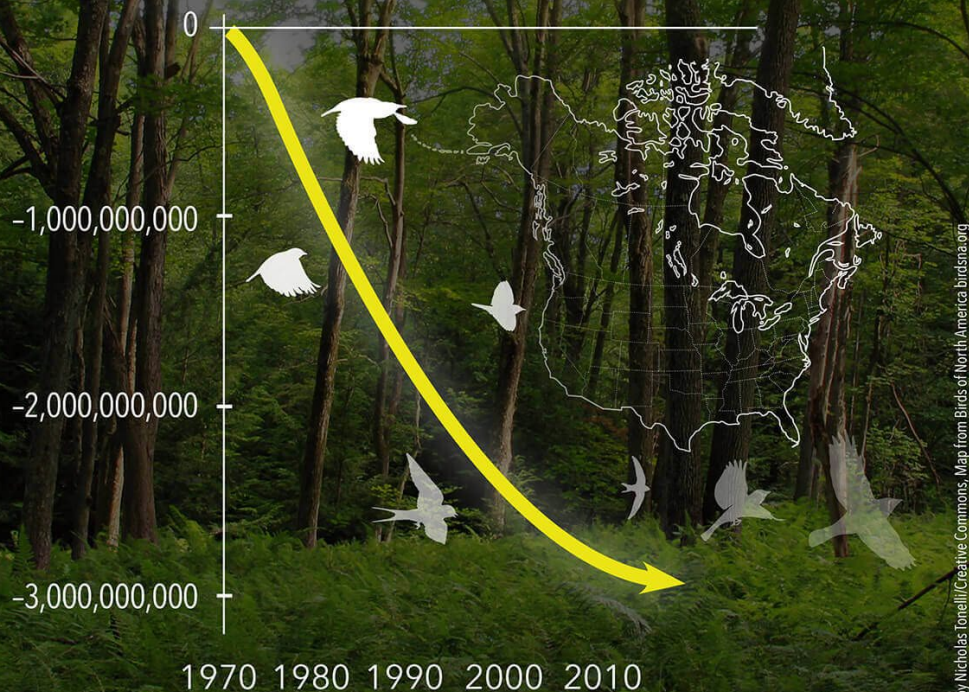


**>40 percent  
Freshwater Fish  
At risk**

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# 2.9 billion birds gone since 1970



Courtesy of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Source: Science, 2019

3 in 4 eastern meadowlarks lost since 1970



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# Monarch DECLINE

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# National Recreation and Park Association



The **National Recreation and Park Association**(NRPA) is the leading not-for-profit organization dedicated to building strong, vibrant and resilient communities through the power of parks and recreation. With more than 60,000 members, NRPA advances this mission by investing in and championing the work of park and recreation professionals and advocates —the catalysts for positive change in service of equity, climate-readiness, and overall health and well-being.



Park and recreation professionals plan, manage, program and maintain 11 million acres of public parks and green spaces across the country, and are poised to bring community-driven climate solutions that build a healthy, more resilient and more equitable future for generations to come.

## NRPA'S THREE PILLARS – OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES



**ADVANCING COMMUNITY  
HEALTH AND WELL-BEING**



**EQUITY AT THE CENTER**



**CLIMATE-READY PARKS**



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## Examples of Actions for Proactive conservation

- Species re-introduction
- Habitat restoration
- Land/water acquisition
- Abundance and distribution surveys
- Invasive species removal
- Disease detection and eradication

# Climate Ready Green Infrastructure



[www.nrpa.org](http://www.nrpa.org)



## RVATION



Volunteers from the Girls Club are working with...

## Engaging the Next Generation of Stewards

Approaching volunteer and outreach programs through an equity lens

By Rena Payan and Sara Jose

**B**lack, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) communities have a rich history of connection to the outdoors, and for centuries have been on the front lines of community-driven work to build a better planet. However, for decades, racist policies and practices have led to biased decisions about where parks are placed, where landfills and toxic waste sites are located, what lands are preserved or degraded, and whose experiences and voices are valued. As a result, BIPOC communities have been denied equal access to outdoor spaces and subjected to toxic environments.

Justice Outside — an organization that advances racial justice and equity in the outdoor and environmental movement — believes in the magic that happens when people of all ages enjoy, explore or find meaningful work in the outdoors. It works hard to ensure that everyone has access to this connection.

Being intentional about how we work with and within communities of color will shape the relationship those communities have with us, our parks and the planet. Asking ourselves the hard questions, centering BIPOC communities' needs and interests, and having the humility to adapt are key to ensuring that

parks remain places for gathering and pride.

Community involvement to the success of ongoing assistance in establishing and conducting parks. Through NRPA, we know that most communities that assist with these efforts skew older, whiter and the community as a whole. Communities of color are passionate about parks and often are at the forefront of finding solutions to some pressing environmental issues. Why don't we see more of that reflection in our parks?

To help, Justice Outside and NRPA partnered with the source: *Engaging in Building Communities Through Stewardship* (Texas Parks and Recreation) Oso Bay Wetland piloted the resource development in spring

## CONSERVATION



One can sign up to host an event. BioBlitz to receive toolkits all the resources needed to host the event.

## A BioBlitz Event for Any Environment

By Tamara Aquino Cespedes, CPRP, and Karyn Molines

**P**ollinators are essential to maintaining healthy habitats. The BioBlitz brings community members together to find, identify and document as many pollinator species as possible within a defined area and timeframe. These events can be tailored to fit any environment, from a city pocket park to an expansive rural landscape. Park and recreation professionals from various locations and settings, such as Dallas and Calvert County, Maryland, are hosting BioBlitz events that leverage community science to provide critical pollinator data, enhance environmental education and inform overall conservation efforts.

### Dallas BioBlitz Engages Youth With Nature

As an urban center, Dallas Park and Recreation provides a vast array of

of conservation advocates, that displays an impactful message: each of us has an active responsibility for taking care of our parks and open spaces.

partnering up with a city employee who had advanced knowledge of pollinators. With these tools, Dallas Park and Recreation hosted a campaign using a Pokémon Go theme that resonated with kids and encouraged them to "collect them all" — it featured images of pollinators for the iNaturalist database, rather than Pokémon. Providing youth a creative way to engage with nature with messaging that is familiar was key.

Information collected from the BioBlitz is now helping other Dal-

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Recovering America's  
Wildlife Act proactive  
conservation solution that  
will prevent wildlife from  
becoming endangered - in  
every state.

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- In 2000, Congress mandated that state wildlife agencies develop State Wildlife Action Plans
- Plans identify priorities for **species**, **habitats**, and the **actions** needed to sustain them
- 12,000+ Species of Greatest Conservation Need

## State Fish and Wildlife Agencies are the key to solving the wildlife crisis



- Blueprint for STATE not AGENCY
- Updated every 10 years (by 2025)
- Public Input Required
- Some states include plans now with many more planning
- Can include recreation and education

- State wildlife agencies employ thousands of highly qualified biologists
- Manage millions of acres of habitat
- Education and Recreation part of mission
- State Wildlife Action Plans aimed at preventing wildlife from becoming endangered



# State Wildlife Action Plans

- public input
- ten-year revisions  
coming up in 2025 or  
sooner for some states
- add in plants



# Partnerships

State wildlife agencies are increasingly looking for strong collaborative partnerships for wildlife conservation and increased engagement with broader audiences; partnerships with local and regional parks can be a win-win for both entities.

- Technical assistance to public and private entities (e.g. towns, land trusts, gardeners)
- Rare species research (Universities)
- Biological monitoring (community science and others)
- Stewardship and Acquisition of Habitat



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# Recreation & Engagement

Photo/birdwatching blinds

Paddling & Hiking Trails

Canoe/Kayaks access

Skills Training (e.g. how to birdwatch)

Lands and Waters





Education

Nature Centers

K-12 Nature programming

Children in Nature Network

Parks for Pollinators Bio Blitz



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- Birders
- Gardeners
- Hunters & Anglers
- Hikers
- Paddlers
- Outdoor Retailers and Manufacturers
- Park Professionals
- Energy Companies and MORE

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# COLLABORATIONS WITH STATE WILDLIFE AGENCIES

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RICHARD HEILBRUN



# What's in a Wildlife Action Plan?

Distribution and Abundance of species of concern

Location and condition of important habitats

Identify Threats

Identify Conservation Actions

Monitoring Strategies

Public and partner Input





# Maintaining & Improving Relevancy

- State agencies are deeply concerned about relevancy
- Often, “relevancy” conversations center on R3 efforts for hunting and angling
- Local & regional parks are at the forefront of connecting people with nature and outdoor recreation

## Iowa's experiment

- Recognizing that Hunting and fishing have huge barriers, they're starting with low entry cost activities



# STATE WILDLIFE AGENCIES CAN HELP PROVIDE:

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- Expert advice on land management, habitat restoration
- Technical assistance on solving wildlife conflict
- Political cover for contentious wildlife issues
- Recognition for positive impact
- Funding for local programming?



# A POSSIBLE VISION

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Land managers and park systems may be able to provide:

- Data on rare plants and wildlife
- Land management/ habitat restoration of priority habitats or populations
- Increase relevancy through co-branded programming
- Education and recreation to more people
- Exposure to future “customers” for more engaged activities (bird watchers, nature photographers, anglers)



# IMPROVING HABITAT FOR BURROWING OWLS IN EL PASO, TEXAS

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# BUOW PREY EVALUATION TO DRIVE LAND MANAGEMENT DECISIONS

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CASE STUDY:

CATTLE EGRETS IN  
BRACKENRIDGE  
PARK



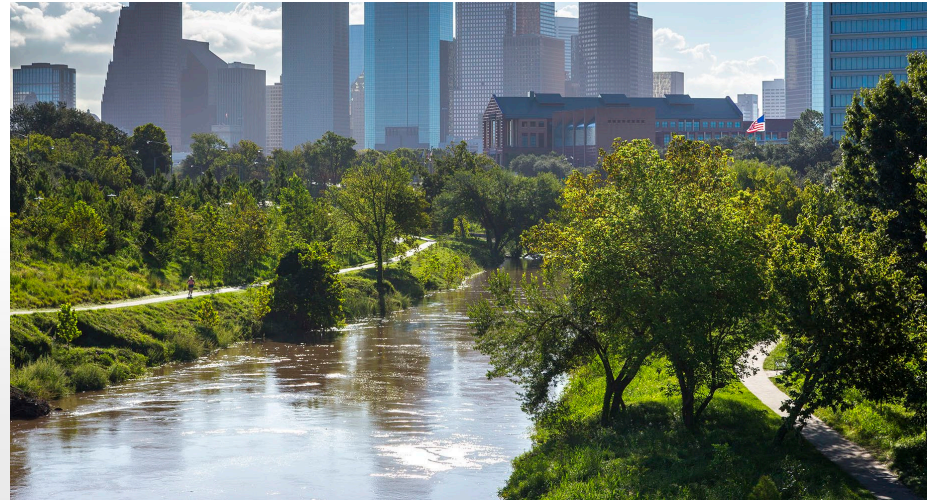
CASE STUDY:

WATERSHED  
PROTECTION IN EL  
PASO

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CASE STUDY:

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BUFFALO BAYOU IN HOUSTON



# CURRENT STRUCTURE OF RIPARIAN CORRIDOR





# PROPOSED REDESIGN OF RIPARIAN CORRIDOR

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TANDY HILLS IN DALLAS/FORT WORTH



# Acting at Different levels

Land management Policy  
Endangered/Threatened species changes  
Grant Funding  
Joint press releases

Land Management Advice and Equipment  
Data collection and monitoring  
Habitat restoration  
Outreach and education programming



VISION CASTING:  
COLLABORATING  
WITH STATE  
WILDLIFE AGENCIES

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RICHARD HEILBRUN







# What the future could look like... together!

Naomi Edelson  
Sr. Dir, Wildlife Partnerships  
National Wildlife Federation  
[edelsonn@nwf.org](mailto:edelsonn@nwf.org)





Increased Funding: Recovering America's Wildlife Act proactive conservation solution that will prevent wildlife from becoming endangered - in every state.





# \$1.39B = Real money

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- **Dedicated, annual funding** to help at-risk wildlife
- **\$1.3 billion** annually for states
- **\$97.5 million** for tribes



# Investment leads to **SUCCESS**

- Bald Eagle
- Kirtland's Warbler
- New England Cottontail
- Pronghorn
- Wild Turkey
- Striped Bass





# Species Re-Introductions



- Karner Blue Butterfly
- Texas Horned Lizard
- Peregrine Falcon
- California Condor
- Fisher
- Arctic Grayling



WORKING TOGETHER, WE CAN  
**RECOVER**  
AMERICA'S  
WILDLIFE  
#RecoverWildlife





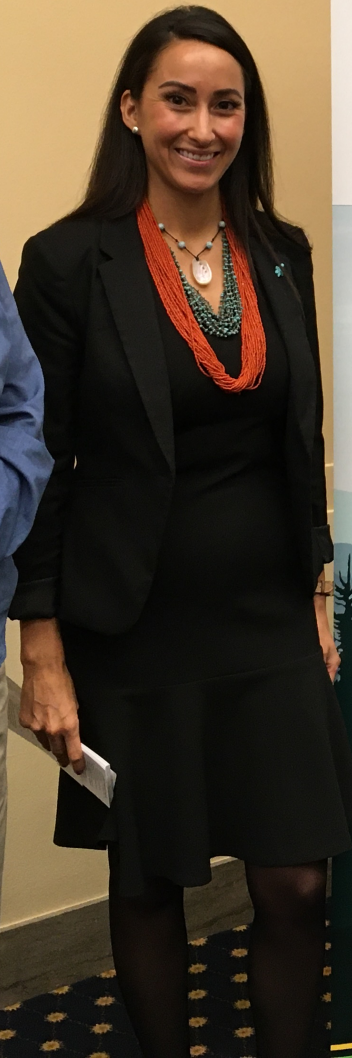


# STATE BY STATE FUNDING

- Alabama \$791K to \$18M
- Arizona \$1.3M to \$31M
- Iowa \$625K to \$15M
- Oregon \$929K to \$24M
- Texas \$2.6M to \$54M
- West Virginia \$515K to \$11.5M









# Tribal Title

- Tribal lands provide vital habitat for > 525 federally listed species and manage >140 million acres
- Past conservation funding for Tribes have been inadequate
- Funding would help Tribes protect species culturally important





## “Shall be Used for...”

- “..to recover and manage *Species of Greatest Conservation Need* and the key habitats and plant community types essential to the conservation of those species..”
- Develop, revise and implement a wildlife conservation strategy
- Assist in the recovery of state and federally listed species





# Funding Provisions

- At least 15% to state and federal endangered species
- 10% in competitive grants
- Up to 15% for wildlife associated recreation and education
- Incentive to include plants
- 25% match by states

# Partnerships (beyond agency)

- Technical assistance to public and private entities
- (e.g. towns, land trusts, gardeners)
- Rare species research (Universities)
- Biological monitoring (community science and others)
- Stewardship and Acquisition of Habitat





# Recreation & Engagement

- Photo/birdwatching blinds
- Paddling & Hiking Trails
- Canoe/Kayaks access
- Skills Training (e.g. how to birdwatch)
- Lands and Waters



# Recreation & Engagement









# Education

- Nature Centers
- K-12 Nature programming
- Children in Nature network











# House Bill (HR 2773)

**Last session**

**185 bipartisan cosponsors**

**26-4 bipartisan vote in committee**



**Currently**

**131 cosponsors (30 R)**

**Goal 200 cosponsors**

**Committee vote December 8**





# **Senate Bill (S. 2372)**

**Heinrich (D-NM) & Blunt (R-MO)**

**28 bipartisan cosponsors (14 R)**

**Bipartisan = Key to Passage**

**EPW Hearing Dec 8**



# Bipartisan Support

- **Good for wildlife**
- **Good for taxpayers**
- **Good for business**





# **CAMPAIGN**

**Elevate Wildlife Crisis**

**Secure Bill Passage**

**Strengthen Conservation  
Movement**



# **STRENGTHING CONSERVATION MOVEMENT**





- Birders
- Gardeners
- Hunters & Anglers
- Hikers
- Paddlers
- Outdoor Retailers and Manufacturers
- Bed and Breakfasts
- Energy Companies and MORE

**LEADERS LIKE YOU**







# What you can do to help

## **CONTACT MEMBERS OF CONGRESS**

- **YOUR OWN MEMBER**
- **YOUR COLLEAGUES**
- **YOUR FAMILY**
- **YOUR FRIENDS**





# What you can do to help

**TALK IT UP!**

**SHARE SOCIAL MEDIA**

**#RECOVERWILDLIFE**





# National Sign-On Letter

**MORE THAN 1500 ORGANIZATIONS AND BUSINESSES HAVE SIGNED ON!**



- NRPA, Audubon, NPCA
- Wild Birds Unlimited
- Bass Pro Shops
- TNC
- Ducks Unlimited





**[NWF.ORG/RECOVERINGAMERICASWILDLIFE](http://NWF.ORG/RECOVERINGAMERICASWILDLIFE)**







# How to Partner with Wildlife Agency

# Partnership in 3+ ways



- **Conservation**
- **Recreation**
- **Education**
- **And: United influence on public and political decision makers**



# Partnership in Conservation



- **All lands/waters**
- **From urban to suburban to rural**
- **Private to public**
- **From local to state to federal**

# Partnership in Recreation



**ALL PEOPLE: broad range of outdoor enthusiasts**

- **Create and Enhance Viewing Sites**
- **Outdoor Skills Training**
- **Increased Access**



# Partnership in Education



- **Children and Adults**
- **Informal and Formal**
- **Environmental Literacy**
- **Outdoor Classrooms**
- **Partner with Zoos,  
Aquariums, Bot gardens,  
etc.**



# TOOLKIT

## FOR Wildlife Conservation Leaders

**Working Together to Reverse America's Wildlife Crisis and Strengthen  
State Fish & Wildlife Agencies for the next 100 years**

The National Wildlife Federation is proud to offer the first-ever toolkit for wildlife conservation leaders to strengthen state fish and wildlife agencies and reverse America's wildlife crisis. We envision building a broad-based coalition that will empower state wildlife agencies to fulfill their mission to conserve all wildlife for all people. A larger and broader constituency for wildlife will inspire political leadership to strengthen the capacity, governance, funding and meet the growing demands of outdoor enthusiasts who fuel our nation's economy. Our goal is to create the climate for strong and effective state fish and wildlife agencies for the next 100 years.





## Action 3: Engage State Agency Leadership

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### Goal

Engage, support and inspire state agency leadership and governing entities to create the future state wildlife agency by expanding the successful model of conservation for game species to all wildlife and to expand wildlife-related outdoor recreation and education to all people.

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# Create Partnership/Relationship



- **On-the-Ground Staff =  
on-the-ground projects**
- **State Agency Leadership =  
policy/priority changes**





# What you bring to table

- **Help agency address barriers to birding, nature photography, hiking, etc.**
- **Make places feel safe**
- **Infrastructure**
- **Close to home opportunities**
- **Local elected officials**

# Engage Leadership



- **Commission/Board**
- **Agency director and senior leadership**
- **Wildlife diversity director**
- **Wildlife Action Plan Lead**
- **State legislators**
- **Governor**



# Engage Agency Leadership



- **Commission meetings**
- **Action Plan and other public forums**
- **Field Trips to local parks**
- **Website – reciprocal**
- **Articles in magazines**
- **Education and Recreation Training**



## Additional Resources

- » [Engage Support Inspire State Agency Worksheet](#)

### Commission/Board:

- » [Commission/Board Fact sheet](#)
- » [Meeting Schedules](#)
- » [Commissioner/Board composition and eligibility](#)
- » [State by State Commission/Board Data](#)
- » [Example Agenda \(WA\)](#)
- » [Responsibilities and Guide](#)
- » [Appointments](#)

### Agency Governance, Programs, Authorities

- » [State Fish and Wildlife Agency Fact Sheet](#)
- » [Agency Mission Statements](#)
- » [Agency Organizational Examples](#)
- » [Governance, Public Input, Public Trust, Transformation Change](#)
- » [Programs, Capacity, Expertise](#)
- » [Plant Resources](#)

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[NEXT: SECURE WILDLIFE FUNDING](#)





## Action 1: Build a Coalition

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### Goal

**Build a diverse coalition of individuals, groups and businesses dedicated to tackling the wildlife crisis and securing the future of all wildlife for all people in your state.**

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A diverse and broad coalition will cultivate the political willpower to inspire leadership, elevate the wildlife crisis, transform the culture and secure funding for state wildlife agencies. You will need to galvanize the coalition to take on these important actions. But how to go about it? Often, our instinct is to campaign for wildlife funding right off the bat. However, a large campaign succeeds when you start with a strong, diverse and effective coalition with a clear purpose to reverse the wildlife crisis. A coalition gives you different

# Coalition Building



- **Encourage parks, education, & recreation community to engage**
- **Ensure local recreation part of future vision**
- **Help host stakeholders' summit (local park setting)**





## Action 2: Elevate the Wildlife Crisis

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### GOAL

**Raise awareness that we are facing a wildlife crisis with many species at risk, and the need for immediate action to prevent wildlife from becoming endangered.**

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Americans from all walks of life value wildlife and in general support its conservation. This

# Elevate Extinction Crisis



- **Stories and pictures about species in action plan**
- **Success Stories**
- **Connection with wildlife and people**





[statewildlifetoolkit.nwf.org](http://statewildlifetoolkit.nwf.org)



Magnitude of Solution  
Must Match  
Magnitude of the Problem









How can we work  
together?