

CHAPTER 5. GENERAL CONSERVATION STRATEGIES

A. General Strategies

Strategies to address declines in target species were determined during a series of public meetings held in the spring of 2005 (this process is described in Chapter 3). Strategies were either specific to a particular habitat type or were general, and therefore applicable to multiple habitats and ecoregions. Aquatic and terrestrial general strategies are listed below. A complete listing of all conservation strategies for terrestrial species is found in Appendix N. All aquatic and marine species conservation strategies appear in Appendix O.

1. Aquatic Summary

Working with LDEQ and other entities to continue to protect streams from sediment and nutrient input is important. Reservoirs are becoming more frequent and a number of new reservoir projects are proposed. LDWF will disseminate information about proposed reservoirs to interested organizations and continue to supply data on natural communities and species that will be affected by these projects. Strengthening and expanding LDWF's Natural and Scenic Streams program will provide stronger protection for streams in the program.

2. Terrestrial Summary

The terrestrial general strategies have been categorized below. However, they are highly interrelated and often overlap. For example, development of educational materials for habitats might involve several categories by engaging partners to create the materials and then providing them to private landowners.

Since so much of Louisiana is privately owned, industrial landowners (particularly forest products companies) and private citizens are vital to the conservation of our wildlife habitats. One frequently-mentioned strategy involved providing an incentive, such as a tax benefit, to landowners who protect and provide stewardship for a particular habitat type on their land. The existing Louisiana Natural Areas Registry Program could be expanded to include such a benefit. Acquiring sites with high-quality habitat by purchasing conservation easements or fee title from willing landowners is another important conservation tool. Many important areas for wildlife occur on WMAs, National Forests, NWRs, State Parks and other public lands.

Numerous federal and state agencies, private industry groups, NGOs and others share with LDWF the interest in protecting and managing Louisiana's wildlife. Developing partnerships with these agencies and groups will greatly advance implementation of the CWCS. These partnerships will allow for a more efficient use of resources including funding and staffing to successfully accomplish the strategy goals. In addition,

coordination of efforts among these groups will prevent unnecessary duplication of programs.

LDWF will provide education and outreach to governmental and non-governmental organizations, and to the general public. Providing information and training is an important first step in informing landowners and managers about conserving target wildlife species and habitats. Publications on such topics as waterbird nesting colonies, shorebird food/habitat requirements, natural communities of Louisiana, identification of rare species and habitats, etc., would be valuable to various groups. One novel education strategy involves promoting “master naturalist” programs through universities to provide more thorough training on Louisiana’s biological diversity and ecology.

Invasive species cause tremendous ecological and economic damage in Louisiana. Providing public education about their detrimental effects and supporting existing educational programs is important. Broadening the scope of the Invasive Species Task Force to include terrestrial species was suggested as a strategy. Wild hogs are particularly damaging to native habitats. LDWF will work with hunting clubs on hog eradication. LDWF will also promote use of FLEP and other state and federal cost share programs that offset costs for landowners to control invasive species.

LDWF will conduct a geographical analysis to determine where best to create new conservation areas in the state based on habitat protection needs. There are several gaps in our knowledge of some groups of animals. LDWF will support additional research on bats in Louisiana and on migratory patterns of birds across the state. There is little known about the diversity and ecology of butterflies and moths, aquatic insects, and other groups of invertebrates. Gaining a better understanding of these groups and how they relate to other species of wildlife and to the environment is necessary to maintain and restore ecosystem function and biological diversity.

B. Aquatic General Strategies:

- Coordinate with LDEQ to review permitted discharges for nitrates and ammonium in Louisiana waters, and to evaluate impacts of these levels near shore regarding hypoxia problems.
- Encourage legislation for a statewide water rights/use plan.
- Participate in state groundwater task force committee to express LDWF’s concerns regarding the impact of reservoir projects (contact: Gary Hansen).
- Partner with LDEQ and EPA to broaden public awareness concerning water quality and related issues.
- Disseminate information to interest groups/agencies about reservoir projects (include interstate cooperation).
- Provide information and data regarding species/natural communities of concern that will be affected by proposed reservoir projects.
- Expand and strengthen the LDWF Natural and Scenic River System and permit review programs.