The Northeast Lexicon
Terminology Conventions and Data Framework
for State Wildlife Action Plans

The Northeastern States:

- **pioneered the use of a common language** in State Wildlife Action Plans (SWAPs) in 2015.

- use the **Lexicon as a foundation for a regional database** to make all 14 SWAPs accessible to diverse conservation partners.

- were recently **awarded a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Competitive State Wildlife Grant** to modernize the current SWAP database.

- steward **diverse habitats across 14 jurisdictions**, including coastal waters and prairies, rivers and streams, forests, and the Appalachian Mountains.

- support nearly **3,000 Species of Greatest Conservation Need** across the 14 SWAPs.

State Wildlife Action Plans (SWAPs) are comprehensive conservation blueprints that guide diverse partners to restore Species of Greatest Conservation Need and their habitats.

In 2022, the Northeast Fish and Wildlife Diversity Technical Committee updated the Northeast Lexicon, incorporating current best practices and new opportunities for collaboration.

The 2022 Lexicon:

- provides a data framework for the first five federally required elements in SWAPs (i.e., species, habitats, threats, actions, monitoring).

- aligns with federal guidance and national voluntary SWAP best practices.

- prioritizes data fields needed for the Northeast SWAP database and regional conservation planning analyses.

Planning for Implementation

During the 10-year cycle, state fish and wildlife agencies work with public and private conservation partners to review, update and implement the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP). The Lexicon provides consistent terms to query, at landscape and state scales, information about Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN), habitats, threats, and actions. These four elements comprise the bulk of SWAPs, but also provide guidance and rationale for implementation and measuring effectiveness (Element 5).

Element 1

Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) are species with declining populations or vulnerabilities expected to benefit from strategic conservation attention.

States refer to established assessments and follow their own methods for selecting SGCN. Conservation partners can help maintain or recover species by referring to the SWAP to learn about their habitat associations, state conservation status, threats, and actions.

Element 2

Habitats – spaces that provide living and non-living resources needed by a species to survive – are critical pieces of the conservation puzzle.

The Northeast Region's fresh and saltwater habitats, subterranean and terrestrial habitats, and the interfaces between are organized in a simple system of coarse classes and more detailed types. At the regional scale, these habitat classes demonstrate places where SGCN and their threats are concentrated.

Element 3

Wildlife populations are in decline due to a wide range of threats that degrade their habitats or imperil them directly.

The Northeast Lexicon uses a comprehensive list of threats developed by the Conservation Measures Partnership and expanded by the Quebec Ministry of Forests and Parks. By using the same threat language, states can easily identify common issues for different species groups or habitat types. Threat impact is indicated by combined ratings of spatial extent, severity, and immediacy.

Element 4

The actions taken to mitigate threats and achieve conservation outcomes are the primary SWAP objective.

Actions can include:
- habitat restoration
- understanding and mitigating disease
- law enforcement
- land protection
- research and monitoring

The Northeast Lexicon uses a comprehensive system developed by the Conservation Measures Partnership and expanded by the Quebec Ministry of Forests and Parks to categorize actions.