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# Iowa Wildlife Action Plan

## From Vision to On-the-Ground Action

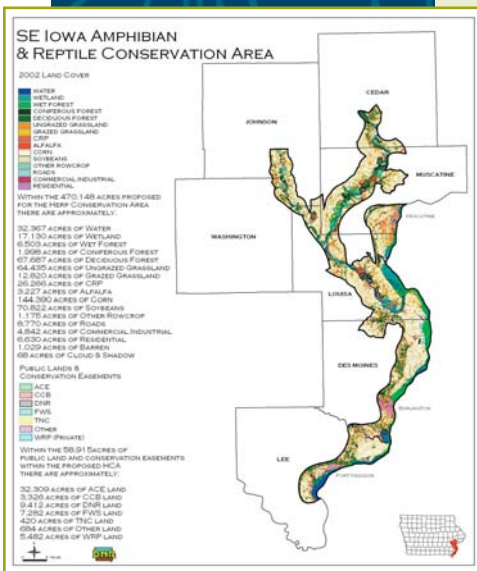
Iowa’s wildlife action plan constitutes the first-ever attempt at accounting and planning for the entire range of the state’s wildlife—birds, fish, mammals, reptiles and amphibians, butterflies, freshwater mussels and other creatures. Aiming to keep common species common, the wildlife action plan presents six visions for the future of Iowa’s wildlife, with goals and multiple management strategies for each. With a habitat-based approach, Iowa’s plan focuses on meeting the needs of 296 species of greatest conservation need.

### *Protecting Imperiled Land, Water, and Wildlife*

## Creating the Nation’s First-ever Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Area

Restoring declining wildlife and increasing the state’s conservation lands are key visions of Iowa’s wildlife action plan. Charismatic mammals receive a lot of public sympathy and there is a long list of conservation areas set aside just for birds. Amphibians and reptiles are frequently overlooked, yet are often the wildlife most at risk – including in Iowa,

where many amphibians and reptiles are on the state’s threatened and endangered list. However, the Mississippi River floodplain in southeast Iowa is still home to enough species to be considered a diversity hotspot. In a historic effort, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and several partners have created the first-ever Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Area across this 470,000-acre floodplain landscape. This area will protect critical habitat for such diverse species as the eastern massasauga, yellow mud turtle, pickerel frog and central newt before they become more rare and costly to protect.



Map of the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Area/  
Iowa Department of Natural Resources



Amphibian and reptile habitat/Doug Harr, Iowa Department of Natural Resources



Setting a track plate to record the presence of passing mammals/Mike Sweet, US Fish and Wildlife Service

### **Gathering Information to Take Action Establishing the First Statewide Inventory and Monitoring System**

The lack of data on Iowa's lesser-known fish and wildlife has hindered previous management efforts, so an important goal of Iowa's wildlife action plan is to establish a systematic method for monitoring wildlife over the long term. In response, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources is carrying out the first comprehensive effort to inventory all of Iowa's wildlife based on U.S. Forest Service methods. Over the next five years, information on all wildlife and associated habitat will be gathered and catalogued at 304 permanent sites, located chiefly on public or permanently protected lands. Each site will be revisited every five years to document any changes in species or habitats, which will assist in making good, cost-effective management decisions over the long term.

### **Proactive Efforts that Benefit Wildlife and People Restoring Iowa's Native Prairies**

Investments in the Iowa Wildlife Action Plan have improved Iowa's ability to restore native prairie landscapes that are so important to Iowa's wildlife. Shortages of plant material, expertise, and the ability to plan on a landscape scale hampered Iowa's efforts in the past. With the creation of the Iowa DNR's Prairie Seed Resources Unit, a Wildlife Habitat Specialist now works with individual wildlife managers to help select proper seed mixes based upon soil type

and other factors unique to each restoration site. Now, thousands of acres are restored annually. These habitat improvements should provide huge benefits to declining grassland wildlife species of greatest conservation need, helping to conserve them for future generations.

### **Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies**

444 North Capitol St, NW  
Suite 725  
Washington, DC 20001  
202.624.7890  
[www.teaming.com](http://www.teaming.com)  
[www.wildlifeactionplans.org](http://www.wildlifeactionplans.org)

### **Iowa Department of Natural Resources**

502 E. 9th Street  
Des Moines, IA 50319  
<http://www.iowadnr.com/wildlife/diversity/plan.html>



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A prairie seed production field/Doug Harr, Iowa Department of Natural Resources