

# Public Participation

## OVERVIEW

This chapter addresses required Element 8 of the NAAT Guidelines, which calls for “broad public participation . . . [when] developing and implementing these plans.” We formed the Communications and Outreach Team (COT) to develop the public participation component of the WAP. The COT met regularly from 2003-2005. They were responsible for developing and implementing a plan for gathering public input. Components included the following:

- A randomly distributed telephone survey of New Hampshire residents as part of a larger northeast regional survey (Fall 2003)
- A “Wildlife Summit” workshop of people who play (or could play) an active role in conserving New Hampshire wildlife (March 2004)
- A web survey based largely on priority issues that came out of the Wildlife Summit (August-November 2004)
- Stakeholder meetings to understand participants’ perceptions of threats to our wildlife and habitats, and conservation strategies (various dates)
- A “Wildlife Conservation Strategy Forum” to gather input on some of the major strategies developed (May 2005)

Many conservation partners were included in the development, research, and writing of the WAP. Species and habitat profiles, threats assessments, and strategies were written in part or in whole by individuals from NHA, St. Anselm’s College, UNH, University

of Massachusetts-Amherst, USFS, USFWS, TNC, Loon Preservation Committee, Franklin Pierce College, North East Ecological Services, NHHNB, Biodiversity, Ibis Wildlife Consulting, and BioDiversity Research Institute. Many conservation partners reviewed materials as they were being developed, including those mentioned above, the New Boston Air Force Base, and others.

## NORTHEAST REGIONAL SURVEY

Responsive Management (a natural resources public opinion consulting company) collected information via a random telephone survey of 400 residents in each of 13 northeastern states. The Northeast Conservation Information and Education Association in conjunction with Responsive Management developed the survey questions, which were used to identify where communication, education, and marketing can improve reputation, credibility, and public support. This project was funded through a Multistate Conservation Grant from the USFWS using Federal Aid in Sport Fish and Wildlife Restoration Funds.

The results of the survey identified major issues to address, and were used especially as a basis for developing education and outreach strategies. Survey information about most commonly used media will help us determine which methods of delivery are most appropriate when implementing strategies. The New Hampshire survey results may be viewed on-line at <http://www.responsivemanagement.com/download/reports/NCIEANH.pdf>

*Public Participation*

**TABLE 1-1. Agencies, organizations, businesses, and interests represented at the Wildlife Summit, March 25, 2004. Representatives of other groups and interests were invited but were unable to attend.**

AGENCY/ORGANIZATION/ENTITY	
Appalachian Mountain Club	New Hampshire House of Representatives
Audubon Society of New Hampshire	New Hampshire Lakes Association
Center for Land Conservation Assistance	New Hampshire landowners
Community conservation commissions	New Hampshire Natural Heritage Bureau
Connecticut River Joint Commission	New Hampshire naturalists
Ducks Unlimited	New Hampshire Office of Energy and Planning
Great Bay Protection Partnership	New Hampshire Snowmobile Association
Harris Center for Conservation	North Country Press
International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies	Pemi Valley Fish and Game Club
Jackson, Jackson and Wagner	Private conservation funders
Local Audubon Society of New Hampshire bird clubs	Private natural resource consultants
Loon Preservation Committee	Public Service of New Hampshire
Manchester Union Leader	Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge
Moose Mountains Regional Greenways	Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests
New England Reptile	Speaking for Animals in New Hampshire
New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions	Squam Lakes Science Center
New Hampshire Conservation Districts	Stephenson Strategic Communications
New Hampshire Coverts Project	The Balsams Grand Resort Hotel
New Hampshire Department of Agriculture	The Nature Conservancy
New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services	The Ruffed Grouse Society
New Hampshire Department of Resources and Economic Development, Division of Travel and Tourism	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
New Hampshire Department of Resources and Economic Development, Parks and Recreation Division	U.S. Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services
New Hampshire Department of Transportation	U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service
New Hampshire Executive Council	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
New Hampshire Farm Bureau	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
New Hampshire Fish and Game Commission	U.S. Senate (New Hampshire representative)
New Hampshire Fish and Game Department	University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension
New Hampshire Governor's Office	University of New Hampshire Department of Natural Resources
New Hampshire Timberland Owners Association	University of New Hampshire Department of Zoology
New Hampshire Trappers Association	Vermont Fish and Wildlife Agency
New Hampshire Wildlife Federation	White Mountain National Forest
Normandeau Associates	Wildlife Management Institute
North Country Council	Wildlife Summit Representation

## WILDLIFE SUMMIT

The purposes of the Wildlife Summit were to:

- Develop public awareness of the comprehensive wildlife planning process
- Engage stakeholders in the planning process to encourage acceptance and increase plan implementation effectiveness
- Develop and enhance better communication among a diverse group of constituents

The Wildlife Summit public participation process was based on one previously used to develop the New Hampshire Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). The lead facilitator and consultant for the Wildlife Summit and the Wildlife Conservation Strategy Forum—Charlie French, UNH Cooperative Extension Community Development Specialist—also acted in that role for the SCORP planning process.

One hundred twelve (112) people participated in the Wildlife Summit. Individuals represented a variety of agencies, organizations, businesses, and interests (Table 1-1). NHFG and UNH Cooperative Extension staff developed a framework of broad topic areas within which to discuss and prioritize issues at the Wildlife Summit. The results of the Wildlife Summit were used in the prioritization and development of our strategies and actions (see results under Appendix H, Wildlife Summit: Public Input on the Wildlife Action Plan).

## WEB SURVEY

A web survey, based largely on priority issues that were identified during the Wildlife Summit, was conducted in August-November 2004. The web survey consisted of twenty-seven questions, eighteen of which were related to the WAP and nine of which were demographic in nature (See Appendix I for a survey). The survey was developed and conducted by UNH Cooperative Extension with input from NHFG staff and members of the Communications and Outreach Team.

The survey was non-random, as individuals chose whether or not to complete the survey. A direct link to the survey was provided from the home page of the NHFG web site. People were directed

to the survey via multiple methods. Public Service of New Hampshire (PSNH) sent an announcement of the survey to all their public utility customers (approximately 440,000), enclosed with their monthly bill. PSNH also placed a sponsor spot on New Hampshire Public Radio promoting completion of the survey. SPNHF and NHA did a one-minute segment on New Hampshire Public Radio, called “Something Wild,” which discussed the WAP and encouraged listeners to complete the web survey. Additional promotion through email, meetings, and other partners’ web sites was done to improve the number of survey respondents.

One thousand two hundred fifty-six (1256) surveys were completed. The table of survey results may be found on the NHFG web site. The results were used to inform the development of strategies for the WAP. The survey results will also be used to guide implementation of the strategies. Here are the top results for three of the questions:

**Q1: “What do you feel are the most important issues affecting wildlife conservation in New Hampshire?” (Multiple responses possible)**

ISSUE	RESPONDENTS
Development/sprawl	39%
Habitat loss (general)	38%
Pollution (general)	8%
Lack of funding	7%
Fragmentation	6%
Government (general)	6%

**Q15: “What actions do you think we should take to conserve wildlife?” (Multiple responses possible)**

ISSUE	RESPONDENTS
Protect/provide habitat	22%
Improve/manage habitat	9%
Smart growth/planned development	7%
More funding (general)	6%
Regulations (development)	6%

*Q18: Of the following actions, which do you feel should be the top three priorities for wildlife conservation in New Hampshire? (Multiple responses possible)*

ISSUE	RESPONDENTS
Prevent habitat loss	86%
Educate citizens about wildlife management	52%
Improve land use planning	40%
Encourage stewardship	36%

## STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

NHFG and UNH Cooperative Extension held or attended meetings, workshops, and sessions around the state to inform and involve the public, understand participants' perceptions of threats to our wildlife and habitats, and seek their input on the development of conservation strategies. These stakeholder meetings are documented in a public participation record (see Appendix J). Meetings ranged from small meetings with 3 or 4 faculty at universities and colleges to larger groups of 30 to 50 people at statewide conferences. The public participation record documents the nature of each meeting.

## WILDLIFE CONSERVATION STRATEGY FORUM

We invited attendees of the Wildlife Summit to participate in the Wildlife Conservation Strategy Forum. Twenty-four people participated. This was considered a continuation of their public participation work. As a part of the WAP, we developed some broad strategies and actions to address threats to our wildlife species and their habitats (see Appendix K, "Wildlife Conservation Strategy Forum"). The issues we focused on were habitat fragmentation, air and water quality, growth and development, and transportation. We sought input on the strategies, actions, and tools that would help us address these four issues. Results of the Wildlife Conservation Strategy Forum were used to inform the development of our strategies relative to these four major issues.