

# PROBLEMS AND STRATEGIES FOR BLACK RACERS IN MAINE

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**Problem 1:** Funding and staff resources are inadequate to accomplish all of the recovery objectives within the approved deadlines.

Strategy 1.1: Pursue outside funding sources (e.g., State Wildlife Grants, Section 6, Outdoor Heritage Fund, etc) to supplement MDIFW's limited annual budget for this Endangered species.

Strategy 1.2: Develop partnerships with local civic and user groups, and conservation partners (e.g. TNC, MAS, MNAP, etc) to secure support and, possibly, supplemental funding.

Strategy 1.3: Combine MDIFW funding resources with University of Maine graduate research opportunities and faculty expertise to advance research objectives.

Strategy 1.4: Utilize conservation easements, cooperative management agreements, and regulatory tools to provide long-term habitat protection when fee acquisition is not feasible.

Strategy 1.5: Secure funding to hire seasonal employees and contract outside expertise to assist with developing and implementing surveys, monitoring programs, habitat and population assessments, outreach plans, and research strategies.

**Problem 2:** Little is known about the life history, population dynamics, habitat requirements, dispersal capabilities, and limiting factors of black racers in Maine. This lack of information may impede development of meaningful population objectives and habitat assessments.

Strategy 2.1: Optimize opportunities through grant work or graduate research partnerships at the University of Maine to determine priority life history and limiting factors for black racers.

Strategy 2.2: Apply comparable data for black racers in other parts of their range, or for similar or related organisms, to developing a temporary working MVP and interim habitat assessment.

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Strategy 2.3: Where comparable data are lacking, prioritize and secure funding for determining the most important data input for developing a working MVP, habitat quality assessment, and research strategies.

**Problem 3:** Habitats supporting black racers are subject to both natural (e.g., succession, fire, etc.) and human-induced (i.e. development, forestry, etc.) alterations, which may affect populations of the snake, or degrade habitat quality on a temporary or permanent basis.

Strategy 3.1: Inform landowners and municipalities of the presence and conservation needs of black racers and their habitat. Encourage compatible land use and stewardship.

Strategy 3.2: Provide long-term habitat protection through cooperative management agreements, acquisition, or regulation.

Strategy 3.3: On sites owned by MDIFW, identify habitat management for black racers as a top priority, and implement management actions as soon as possible.

Strategy 3.4: Develop colorful and informative fact sheets on black racer best management practices for distribution to targeted landowners and conservation partners.

**Problem 4:** Management for black racers may complement or conflict with habitat goals for other rare species (e.g., upland sandpiper, grasshopper sparrow, New England cottontail, northern blazing star).

Strategy 4.1: Conduct comprehensive surveys for rare species, including plants and natural communities, at all sites supporting black racers, and identify potential conflicts.

Strategy 4.2: Document the habitat management needs of black racers at each site, and prepare or revise site management plans that address potential conflicts with other species and land use priorities.

Strategy 4.3: Work with landowners and user groups to build support for black racers, and develop cooperative management agreements to ensure long-term habitat protection.

**Problem 5:** A lack of public awareness and support, along with common misconceptions and fears towards snakes, may impede recovery initiatives for black racers.

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Strategy 5.1: Develop effective outreach and stewardship programs for the general public and affected municipalities, particularly in York County.

Strategy 5.2: Develop partnerships with local user and conservation interest groups.

Strategy 5.3: Work with MDIFW's staff at the Wildlife Park in Gray to create an interpretive kiosk (and/or live display) on black racers specifically, and snake conservation generally.