

Focus Area Review ‘Analysis’ Subcommittee Meeting Notes

July 11, 2014
MNAP Office, 9 – 11 AM

Participants: Barbara Charry (ME Audubon), Dan Coker (TNC), Andy Cutko (MNAP), Sarah Demers (IFW), Bill Hancock (IFW), Don Katnik (IFW), Justin Schlawin (MNAP), Amanda Shearin (IFW), Wade Simmons (MNAP), Bob Stratton (IFW), Barbara Vickery (TNC)

1. Task and Timeline

- We agreed that our current Focus Areas are reasonable and a good starting point for analysis; we do not need to build the Focus Area network from the ground up.
- While we recognize we may not have time to complete all possible analyses by December 1 (our working goal as stated in Mark Stadler’s timeline), we hope to make the most important and obvious updates and edits by that time. Additional analyses beyond that can be added to the SWAP ‘action plan’; the Focus Areas should be a dynamic rather than a static product. We will also aim to make enough progress in the next few months to report out at the next SWAP stakeholder meeting on September 23.
- We sought clarification regarding the role of this sub-committee vs. the ‘updates’ sub-committee. There is clearly some overlap that will require coordination, but in general the ‘update’ sub-committee will look at the *quality and currency* of relevant data (e.g., data availability for SGCN, various habitats) and what approach to take with incomplete data. The ‘analysis’ sub-committee will determine what data to use, how to weigh various types of data in our analyses, how to determine if there are significant gaps or in Focus Areas, and how we might fill those gaps.
- The updates sub-committee will also take the lead on the Focus Area criteria diagram (spokes on the wheel), though our sub-committee will also have input. Multiple members of the analysis sub-committee will likely attend the ‘updates’ meeting, and there may be a need to merge these sub-committees in the future.

2. Key Questions

- We discussed whether to distinguish Priority 1 vs. Priority 2 Focus Areas (i.e., statewide vs. local significance) and for a variety of reasons decided not to pursue that distinction. There may eventually be a need to recognize varying Focus Area priorities within state government, but these distinctions may depend on the funding purpose, management vs. acquisition, etc.
- We discussed the relevancy of role of existing conserved lands in Focus Areas and decided that conserved land should not be used as a criteria or driver of Focus Areas, since conserved lands are constantly changing and some conserved lands still are suitable for wildlife management.
- We made a list of features that currently may not be captured by Focus Areas and may need to be added to the Focus Area criteria. These include *early successional habitats and grasslands, clusters of small wetlands, small islands, and caves/hibernacula*. These features are in addition to items to be tackled by other sub-committees: *aquatic systems* and *coastal/marine* features. We also had some discussion around how to capture these various features.

- In addition, the *condition* of Focus Areas (e.g., forest structure and composition, intactness of habitat, ‘ecological integrity’) may need to be more explicitly highlighted in our criteria.
- An approach to capturing ‘*managed landscapes*’ may be tackled by the ‘updates’ sub-committee, but we need to confirm that.

3. Possible Steps in Analysis

- We reviewed the large Focus Area table created by Justin. It illustrates how Focus Areas capture more than 15 different features in GIS. Many of these features are included in the Focus Area criteria diagram (e.g., ‘IWWH’), but others have been calculated (e.g., ‘acres of conserved land’, ‘ecological integrity’, ‘connectivity’).
- Possible new metrics, in relation to climate change, include TNC data on internal connectivity and representation of geophysical settings. We had some explanation and discussion of these metrics but suggested that Barbara and Dan review the data and make a recommendation at our next meeting regarding how to use them.
- While the table is quantitative, it is a bit overwhelming, and we decided we needed a quick way to characterize the Focus Areas in a sentence or two -- e.g., ‘large wetland complex with IWWH and black terns’.
- We also decided it would be helpful to have a habitat breakdown for each Focus Area; this can likely be calculated in GIS using habitat ‘ecological systems’ and scaling up to ‘macrogroups’ (which will resonate more with the public). The habitat breakdowns for each Focus Area will also allow us to assess which SGCN’s are associated with each Focus Area once the habitat-SGCN linkages have been established.

4. Next Meetings & Next Steps

We will try to have a check-in conference call in a few weeks and another in person meeting toward the end of August. We will need to confer with other Focus Area sub-committee meetings prior to reporting out at the next proposed SWAP stakeholder meeting on September 23.

- **Don** will explore methods to identify complexes of wetlands that may be overlooked by our current criteria.
- **Don** will also investigate the feasibility of creating a database to track information on Focus Areas, possibly enabling linkages to existing databases on SGCN.
- **Andy** will take the lead on creating short descriptions of each Focus Area that highlight their key wildlife/biodiversity attributes.
- **Andy** will draft meeting minutes and circulate them and will also send out a Doodle poll to pick upcoming dates for a conference call and next meeting.
- **Justin** will use GIS to create lists of habitat ‘macrogroups’ that are in each Focus Area.
- **Barbara V. and Dan** will review TNC resilience and connectivity data to inform the group on the best ways to incorporate them.