

## 2015 Maine Wildlife Action Plan

### Conservation Partner Meeting #2

September 30, 2014

#### Habitat Breakout Session: Freshwater Wetlands

*Facilitators: Amanda Shearin (MDIFW), Phillip deMaynadier (MDIFW)*

*Notes: Danielle D'Auria (MDIFW)*

Participants: Jim Vogel (BPL), Bob Stratton (MDIFW), Justin Schlawin (MNAP), Samantha Horn-Olson (LUPC), Sue Bickford (Wells Reserve), Rich Jordan (MAWS), Bethany Atkins (MDIFW), Sally Stockwell (MAS), Jerry Longcore (Orono Land Trust), Ken Scribner (Maine Bowhunters Assoc.), Bob Houston (USFWS).

#### General questions and discussion

- Where do vernal pools belong?
  - Phillip explained we added them as a system under Ponds & Lakes.
- Are fairy shrimp considered for SGCN?
  - They are not currently proposed as SGCN – they fall into understudied taxa, but to the extent that we only know the genus that occurs in Maine, not the species (and whether there is one or more species).
  - Other vernal pool-dependent species did make the list (Blanding's turtle, spotted turtle, ribbon snake, blue-spotted salamander).
  - Vernal pools would rise to importance based on the number of SGCN they support, and because they are critical to some of those species' life histories.
- The classification system as it applies to wetlands.
  - It is very new to some in the group – they are used to the Cowardin classification system.
  - Why not use Cowardin? Phillip explained the Northeast Terrestrial Habitat Classification System is being used by other northeast states and therefore allows our plans to roll-up on a regional level (part of the common lexicon). We decided it would be nice to have additional descriptors for the habitat systems, including but not limited to the Cowardin classifications that would apply. A cross-walk likely already exists, and Justin will look into finding it.

#### Discussion of habitats and SGCN-habitat associations

- Strong desire to have some way of designating habitat that is critical/essential to a species.
  - Discussed the idea of adding primary and secondary modifiers to help prioritize habitats, but no one liked those terms. "Essential" was brought up in terms of essential for breeding or essential for non-breeding aspects. Could select more than 1 habitat as

essential breeding and so forth. Could start with P1 SGCN and see how it works, then go to P2s. Thought this was still too broad and wouldn't allow narrower prioritization of habitats.

- “Obligate” was discussed as an option – for those species that truly depend on a specific habitat type.
  - This would only be used when a species wouldn't exist if that habitat did not exist.
  - Some felt like this was obvious info we already know and wouldn't be very helpful.
- Strong need to be able to be more specific about the value of habitats – if we include all possible species (i.e., generalists), then the information gets watered down and is not as credible.
  - An example would be during the evaluation of an easement conservation/management plan...if 30 SGCN are listed for a habitat type, it may give the impression that the habitat is truly valuable, even if many of those are generalists that don't depend on the habitat. Hard to hang your hat on this type of product – the more specific and refined the better.
  - By including “obligate”, can have a broad list and then a few SGCN identified as obligates for that habitat (if applicable).
  - For many conservation efforts, can't always act at a species level; rather, will look to the habitat and the number and types of species associated with it.
- Determining the Appropriate Scale for SGCN Distributions
  - As for scale, the smaller the unit the better as long as it can roll-up to meaningful levels such as ecoregion, county, HUC. Strong desire to include ecoregion – need to get people thinking on a more regional and landscape scale rather than just within jurisdictional boundaries. Ecoregions are very meaningful boundaries in terms of plant associations and ecological systems.
  - Should also keep in mind the habitat condition, seral stage, invasions by non-natives, etc. Not sure where these all come in.
  - Need to tease out “unknown habitat system.” Currently this could mean: 1) we don't know what system in that macrogroup is assoc. with the species, 2) we only went to macrogroup for P3 species, and 3) we may know that 1 of those systems apply, but aren't sure about the others within the macrogroup. This was confusing to the conservation partners.
  - Obvious ways to prioritize habitats for conservation actions include those that support a high number of SGCN (for example: only P1s, P1 and P2, or all P1-P3). Also could prioritize based on number that are “obligate” species for that habitat type. An additional possibility would be to select a functional subset of SGCN to serve as surrogates for additional SGCN that also use the same habitat.