

PROBLEMS AND STRATEGIES FOR BALD EAGLE MANAGEMENT IN MAINE

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August 30, 2004

Problem 1: Loss of special regulatory protection afforded bald eagles as an Endangered or Threatened Species since 1978 could again jeopardize them. A prominent concern is the inevitable pressures on waterfront habitats favored by eagles.

Strategy 1.1: Work toward accomplishing the many objectives proposed to guide bald eagle management efforts in Maine through 2019 that are geared to minimize these risks and detect setbacks before chronic declines arise. Also, expand efforts involving land conservation, private stewardship, landscape planning, technical assistance, and outreach programs to protect bald eagles, and continue partnerships that dovetail with broader conservation initiatives

Strategy 1.2: Promote new guidelines for protecting eagles and their habitats, which are being developed under the Bald Eagle - Golden Eagle Protection Act, and which will likely accompany a federal delisting proposal.

Strategy 1.3: Host public hearings / workshops during future delisting proposals by USFWS and MDIFW.

Strategy 1.4: Evaluate future patterns of eagle nesting and reproduction relative to protection status (e.g., lands in conservation ownership, easement properties, those under cooperative management agreements, and unmanaged sites).

Problem 2: Current staff and funding available to this and many wildlife conservation programs are inadequate to fully address future challenges. Specialty funds / donations, traditionally relied upon to generate state revenue and match for federal aid programs, do not provide reliable long-term support to these efforts.

Strategy 2.1: Promote broadened public awareness, support, and funding for programs.

Strategy 2.2: Continue to stress Maine's significance to national recovery efforts for bald eagles, including: the population's strategic importance in the Northeast, the serious impacts from an array of environmental contaminants,

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and Maine's unparalleled efforts to provide regulatory protection to important eagle habitats.

Problem 3: Carrying capacity limitations to breeding and wintering populations of bald eagles in Maine are not adequately documented.

Strategy 3.1: Determine levels of carrying capacity regionally within Maine. Projections of nesting habitat and breeding populations both infer that statewide carrying capacity will not be limiting through the 15-year planning horizon, however, regional limits may become influential, especially in southwestern Maine.

Strategy 3.2: Refine existing models to evaluate suitable nesting habitat, determine food resource limitations to breeding and wintering eagles, and more accurately quantify carrying capacity.

Problem 4: Food resource limitations (quantity and / or quality) may arise with expanding eagle numbers.

Strategy 4.1: Encourage and support restoration of anadromous fish in Maine. Sustainable fisheries are most important to Maine's bald eagles. The status and restoration of anadromous fish is crucial to enhance survival of eagle aggregations (non-breeders) and productivity among breeding adults.

Strategy 4.2: Encourage and support monitoring of environmental contaminants (e.g., polychlorinated biphenyls and mercury) that still influence eagle reproduction or survivorship.

Problem 5: Changes in eagle mortality have a vastly greater impact on population stability than productivity, but they are more difficult to monitor.

Strategy 5.1: Monitor eagle mortality and injury to track the proportion attributable to human influences (e.g., poisoning, electrocution, illegal shooting, trapping, etc.) that are typically additive to natural death rates of long-lived species like eagles.