



June 2, 2025

New Mexico Department of Game and Fish
1 Wildlife Way
Santa Fe, NM 87507

Submitted via email to dgf-SWAP@dgf.nm.gov

RE: New Mexico Wild Comment in Support of Draft SWAP

To Whom It May Concern:

New Mexico Wilderness Alliance (New Mexico Wild) writes in strong support of the Draft State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP). New Mexico Wild is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) grassroots organization dedicated to the protection, restoration, and continued enjoyment of New Mexico's wildlands, wildlife, and water. Founded in 1997, we achieve our mission through administrative protection, federal wilderness designation, and ongoing stewardship. We represent thousands of individual members from all corners of New Mexico and across the nation who care about New Mexico's wildlife and the habitats on which they rely.

We are fortunate to live and work in New Mexico, one of the most biologically diverse states in the nation. Our state hosts approximately 6,000 documented species of wildlife that occupy our deserts, grasslands, forests, alpine tundra, and riparian and aquatic environments. This rich wildlife heritage gives rise to a heightened responsibility for thoughtful stewardship.

The updated SWAP provides a critical framework to help the Department of Game and Fish (soon-to-be Department of Wildlife) meet that responsibility. The SWAP incorporates the best available science and diverse subject matter expertise, and it provides an accessible, high-level overview of the status of species and their habitats across New Mexico. The SWAP sets forth a conservation blueprint that will facilitate the Department's work to prevent the decline of imperiled species and support viable populations of New Mexico's 505 Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). The SWAP also provides tools for partners. For example, the SWAP identifies Conservation Opportunity Areas to assist both the Department and others, including nongovernmental organizations, to focus wildlife and habitat restoration efforts in locations that will address New Mexico's most critical wildlife needs. Additionally, the SWAP qualifies New Mexico for federal funding, including State Wildlife Grants. Unfortunately, the continued availability of federal funding for species conservation is uncertain, making the state's role in wildlife conservation even more imperative.

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Fortunately, New Mexico is rising to meet this challenge. In the 2025 legislative session, the New Mexico Legislature passed Senate Bill 5, which enacts a holistic wildlife stewardship model, and appropriated \$9 million for implementation. These state commitments to wildlife and SGCN stewardship build upon recurring funding from the Land of Enchantment Legacy Fund. These measures, along with the updated and pragmatic SWAP, will go a long way toward ensuring New Mexico's non-game wildlife thrive well into the future.

New Mexicans have consistently demonstrated their overwhelming support for protecting our state's wildlife, including non-game species and pollinators, as an irreplaceable and vital resource. We applaud the Department for considering the conservation value of non-crustacean arthropods, especially the important ecological role of pollinating insects. The Department properly included pollinating insects in the SGCN selection process, consistent with their ecological and agricultural importance and with Senate Bill 5, which provides broader authority for the Department to steward beneficial insects.

New Mexico Wild is proud to have participated as a member of the Department's Core Team to update and revise the SWAP. We commend Department staff for conducting a timely, professional, and inclusive SWAP process. We especially thank Assistant Chief for Technical Guidance, Virginia Seamster, and her entire team for their outstanding work drafting a comprehensive, science-driven plan. Approval of the SWAP will prevent New Mexico's diversity of wildlife species from declining and will keep our rare, imperiled, and keystone species healthy for current and future generations of New Mexicans.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to New Mexico Wild anytime. We look forward to continuing to work with the Department of Wildlife on wildlife and habitat stewardship initiatives.

Sincerely,

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