

October 23, 2018

Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy: Summary for SEAFWA Directors – October 2018

Recommended Goal for the Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy

Background – In fall 2017, the SEAFWA directors charged the lead coordination team of the Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy (SECAS) to work with the SECAS Points of Contact (POCs) to develop explicit common goals for the initiative. The POCs were selected by the SEAFWA Directors and the Federal Principles of the Southeast Natural Resource Leaders Group (SENRLG). Over multiple conference call discussions, the POCs reviewed a synthesis of existing ecosystem assessments, discussed multiple options for an explicit goal, and recommend the following for adoption.

Recommended SECAS Goal

Long-term

- 10% or greater improvement in the health, function, and connectivity of southeastern ecosystems by 2060

Near-term

- 1% improvement in the health, function, and connectivity of southeastern ecosystems every 4 years
- 1% increase in conservation actions within the Southeast Conservation Blueprint every 4 years

Basis for goal numbers – The long-term goal is intended to be both ambitious and achievable. It is based on a synthesis of 12 regional and subregional ecosystem assessments covering the Southeast (e.g., Everglades Report Card, State of the South Atlantic, Chesapeake Bay Report Card, State of the Birds, etc.). The near-term goals identify minimum progress needed to stay on track with meeting the long-term goal.

Intended uses for goal

- Provide a simple description of what SECAS is trying to do. This will complement the broad SECAS vision of designing and achieving a connected network of landscapes and seascapes that supports thriving fish and wildlife populations and improved quality of life.
- Attract additional sources of conservation funding to the Southeast. A shared goal and measurement system can help communicate the need for additional funding.
- Identify new opportunities for collaboration around shared interests. A shared goal and understanding of Southeastern ecosystem condition can help reveal new ways to work together that may not be obvious when looking at species and ecosystems in isolation.
- Improve connections with “non-traditional” partners. A shared goal can help improve communication with private landowners, urban planners, forestry/agricultural interests, the Department of Defense, and other organizations shaping the lands and waters of the Southeast.

Recommended Action: Directors will be asked to adopt the above goal statement.

2018 North American Conference: SECAS held a successful special session at the North American Conference in Norfolk, Virginia. The special session was titled *The Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy: A Model for Collaborative Conservation* and emphasized partnerships with the military and working with non-traditional partners on private lands. Presenters recently submitted manuscripts of their talks for publication in the *Transactions of the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference*.

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Updates to the Southeast Conservation Blueprint:

Updated priority map – The Southeast Blueprint has been updated to incorporate new information from the Texas Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool (CHAT). This fills in a previous gap in western Texas. By connecting with the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' CHAT in the West and Nature's Network in the Northeast, the Blueprint now provides seamless coverage over most of the United States.

New threat layers – This Blueprint update also includes threat layers for the Southeast region, including sea-level rise and urbanization. These can be overlaid with the Blueprint to identify both high urgency and low risk conservation opportunities.

Updated website information and user stories – The SECAS website has been updated to reflect the most current information. In particular, the SECAS in Action story map now highlights how individuals and organizations across the Southeast are using the Blueprint and other cross-boundary products of SECAS to make a difference on the ground. The story map showcases compelling examples of the more than 100 people from over 50 organizations who have used or are using the Blueprint to inform their decision-making and bring in new resources for conservation.

Improved user support – As the number of active Blueprint users has grown, SECAS has also increased its user support capacity. A user support lead has now been identified for every state in the Southeast. User support staff are available to help answer questions about the Blueprint, interpret data, make maps, do analysis, write grant proposals, and more. They also incorporate user feedback into the Blueprint revision process to help guide future improvements and ensure the priorities match on-the-ground conditions.

Updated SECAS info sheet – A one-page introductory SECAS factsheet has also been updated and is available on the SECAS website. As soon as Version 3.0 of the Southeast Blueprint is officially released, the new Blueprint will be incorporated into that factsheet.

For More Information

- The SECAS website (www.SECASsoutheast.org) contains additional information.
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