



# ANNUAL REPORT

2021-2022



## WHO WE ARE

The Midwest Landscape Initiative is a collaborative of partners engaged in the conservation and management of fish and wildlife in the Midwest. We work with others to identify shared, landscape-scale fish and wildlife priorities and co-develop effective conservation solutions.

The initiative was started in 2018 by the state directors belonging to the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and leadership of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the regions intersecting with the Midwest association.

## OUR VISION

A thriving landscape of healthy lands and waters supporting wildlife, fish, and plants, embraced by all who live, work, and recreate in the Midwest.

## OUR GOALS

By 2030, our goals are to achieve:

- A 10% increase in the health and connectedness of Midwest lands and waters, to include conservation of intact landscapes, as well as restoration and enhancement of degraded landscapes.
- Sustainable populations of wildlife, fish, and plant species.
- An increase in the relevance of nature and the practice of pro-conservation and outdoor recreation behaviors of those who live, work, and recreate in the Midwest.

## HOW WE OPERATE

The Midwest Landscape Initiative's organizational structure includes a steering committee that provides leadership, direction, and access to resources and capacity; a technical committee that recommends priorities, provides technical guidance and coordination; and a number of working groups and teams that provide specialized technical resources and coordination for priorities and oversight of product development.

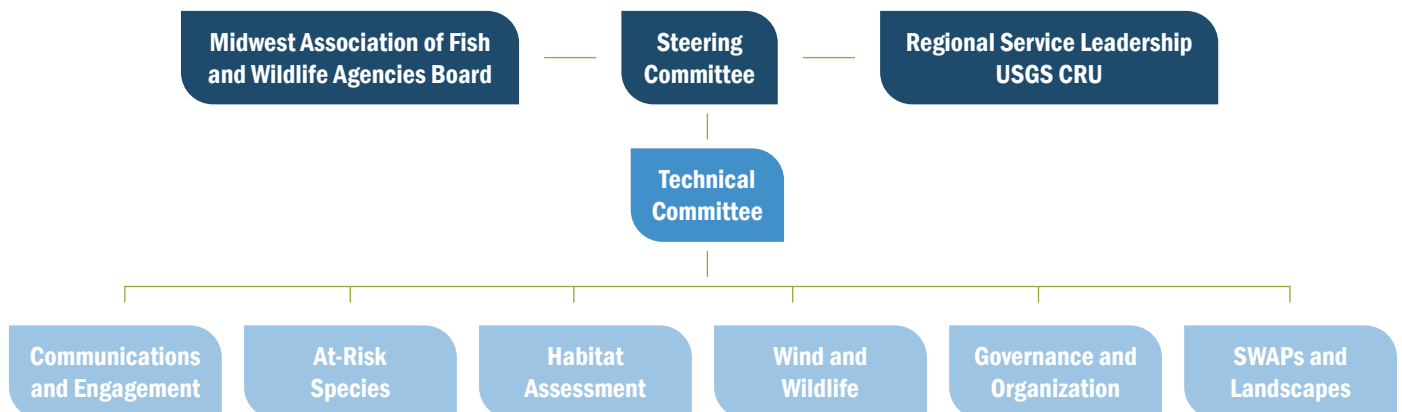


## MLI IS GROWING

In addition to the expanding participation on the Midwest Landscape Initiative's committees, working groups, and teams, the initiative has added staff capacity in the past year. They include Landscape Conservation Biologist Alex Wright, of Fish and Wildlife Service Region 3; User Support Specialist Kate Parsons, of Fish and Wildlife Service Region 3; and Spatial Analyst Rachael Carlberg, of the National Conservation Training Center.

With the upcoming retirement of Ed Boggess, the Missouri Department of Conservation has contributed the time and talents of Lorisa Smith as the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Executive Liaison.

## MLI STRUCTURE





## OUR WORK

### Regional Species of Greatest Conservation Need

The Midwest Landscape Initiative developed a Regional Species of Greatest Conservation Need List to provide an effective, collaborative focus and approach for regional wildlife diversity conservation in the Midwest. The Midwest RSGCN process evaluated 1,817 species of greatest conservation need across 13 taxonomic groups and selected 340 as regional priorities. Taxa groups included mammals; birds; reptiles; amphibians; fish; crayfish; mussels; dragonflies and damselflies; bumble and solitary bees; lepidopteran butterflies, skippers and moths; mayflies; stoneflies; and caddisflies.

In the next phase of this project, the At-Risk Species Working Group will analyze the habitats and threats data for these species to reveal patterns of significance and identify highest priority actions for the Midwest.

### MLI Website

The Midwest Landscape Initiative's website went live in November 2021 and serves as a public-facing informational resource about the initiative and its mission, people, and projects. The website also features news updates as well as links to relevant external news articles and will host future initiative products and resources as they become available. Find it at [www.MLImidwest.org](http://www.MLImidwest.org).

### Midwest Conservation Action Plan

The Midwest Landscape Initiative is developing several elements of a Midwest Conservation Action Plan. The plan is a comprehensive, regional framework intended to coordinate voluntary conservation actions and investments across the Midwest. The action plan include a series of decision-support products that will help achieve the Vision and Goals of the initiative by prioritizing action across space, measuring progress over time, and providing the technical science to best inform action. Action plan products under development include: Midwest Conservation Blueprint; a State of the Midwest Report; and a web-based Data Hub.

### SWAP Coordination and RAWA Readiness

In response to the September 2021 Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies report, *Leading At-Risk Fish & Wildlife Conservation: A Framework to Enhance Landscape-Scale and Cross-Boundary Conservation Through Coordinated State Wildlife Action Plans*, the Initiative created a Midwest State Wildlife Action Plans and Landscapes team comprised of state, federal, and nonprofit members. This team will investigate and pursue methods for improved regional collaboration around action plans, Species of Greatest Conservation Need, and will prepare for potential passage of the Recovering America's Wildlife Act.





## WHERE WE'RE GOING

The Midwest Landscape Initiative continues to serve as a forum for those taking conservation action across the Midwest to collaborate in a proactive manner. The initiative provides space for those responsible for putting conservation on the ground to connect with strategic thinkers and others in the region.

Ultimately, participants within the region will be able to jointly identify conservation priorities and deliver conservation actions across broad scales to showcase the conservation success that can be realized when we work together. The efforts are an intentional step away from random acts of conservation toward a framework that allows us to leverage our work across boundaries to conserve our shared nature.

Participation in the initiative is voluntary, but strategic. The hope is that conservation partners at every level will find value in the initiative's products and framework and will engage with the collaboration.



## JOIN THE EFFORT

If your organization wants to find out more about how to plug into MLI, please reach out to [kelley\\_myers@fws.gov](mailto:kelley_myers@fws.gov). We look forward to working with you on future projects.