



ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL YEAR
2022-'23



WHO WE ARE

The Midwest Landscape Initiative (MLI) is a collaboration of fish and wildlife organizations that identifies shared conservation priorities to develop solutions for healthy, functioning ecosystems in the Midwest.

The Midwest Landscape 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 Regions that intersect with the Midwest region.

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, including 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

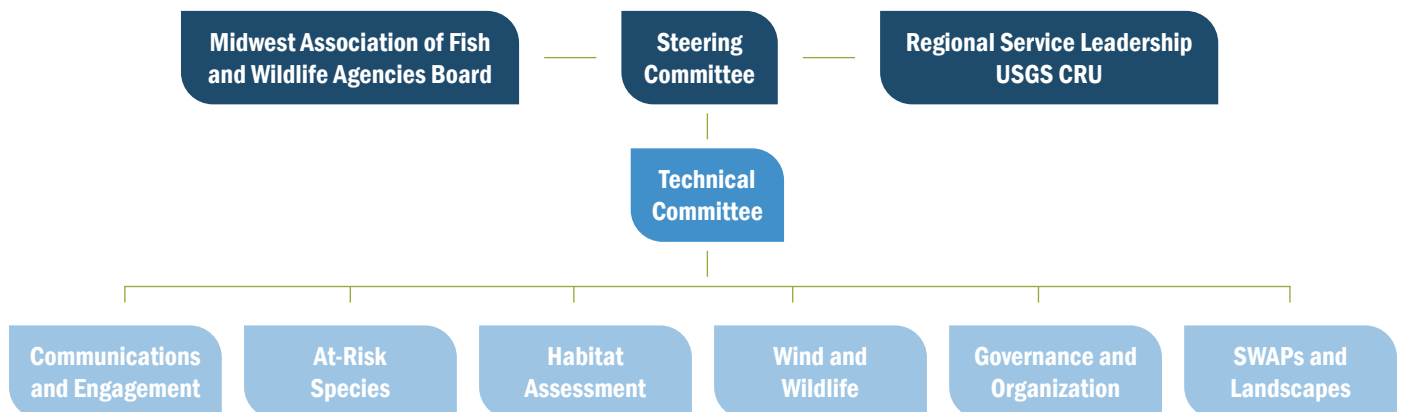
Our organizational structure includes a Steering Committee that provides overall leadership and access to resources and capacity; a Technical Committee that recommends priorities, provides technical guidance and coordination; and several working groups and teams that provide specialized technical resources and coordination for specific priorities and oversight of product development.



WE ARE GROWING

We now have five full-time and one part-time staff members. They are dedicated to bringing to life the vision, ideas and products developed by our members and partners.

MLI STRUCTURE



OUR WORK

Regional Species of Greatest Conservation Need

We developed a Regional Species of Greatest Conservation Need (RSGCN) List to provide an effective, collaborative focus and approach for regional wildlife diversity conservation in the Midwest.

The process evaluated 1,817 species of greatest conservation need across 13 taxonomic groups and selected 340 species for the Midwest RSGCN list; these species are of high regional concern and importance and would benefit most from multi-state coordinated efforts.

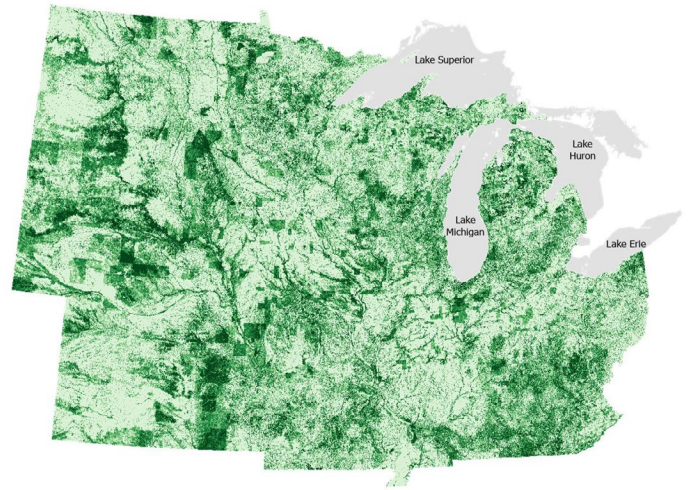
The next phase of this project includes further prioritizing species for regional collaboration based on shared threats and conservation actions as well as status on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Listing Workplan.

SWAP Coordination

The Midwest SWAPs and Landscapes team is working to improve regional collaboration around State Wildlife Action Plans (SWAPs) and Species of Greatest Conservation Need through development of regional best practices, databases, and data tools. This team is developing dashboard data viewing tools for the Regional Species of Greatest Conservation Need data as well as information on species, habitats, threats, and conservation actions contained within SWAPs across the region. Additional work of this team includes development of shared lexicons and other regional products to assist with states' SWAP update processes.

Midwest Conservation Action Plan

We are currently 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. Specifically, the plan is a series of decision-support products that will help achieve the vision and goals by prioritizing action across space, measuring progress over time, and providing the technical science to best inform action. The products under development include the Midwest Conservation Blueprint, a State of the Midwest Report, and a publicly accessible ArcGIS Hub.



Midwest Conservation Blueprint & ArcGIS Hub

During the past year, we have led the development of the Midwest Conservation Blueprint with participation from federal and state agency staff across the region. The Blueprint is a base map of priority lands and waters for conservation across the Midwest. It prioritizes areas using 20+ cross-cutting societal and environmental values (i.e. indicators), which include biodiversity, drinking water, and public recreation, among many others.

The blueprint serves as an invitation to all those in the region to work in a more coordinated and collaborative way to amplify our individual efforts into a broader collective impact. The blueprint will be publicly released on an ArcGIS Hub site (with other relevant data, science, and plans) during summer 2023. Public comments are being considered to improve the priorities and data sets that inform the blueprint. You can learn more about the blueprint, the underlying data, and provide public comments at tinyurl.com/mliblueprint.

MLI Communication

Our website, MLIMidwest.org, serves as a public-facing informational resource about the MLI 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 products and resources as they become available. Several webinars were held last year. Recordings can be found on our website by searching for “webinar.”

WHERE WE'RE GOING

We continue to serve as a forum for those taking conservation action across the Midwest to collaborate in a proactive manner. MLI provides space for those responsible for putting conservation on the ground to connect with strategic thinkers in the region. We facilitate the development of collaborative grant proposals that support our jointly identified regional conservation priorities.

Through the development and use of common language and shared outcomes, partners aim to increase the amount of funding received through America the Beautiful Challenge Grants, Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, Infrastructure Reduction Act, Competitive State Wildlife Grants, and other sources to benefit strategic, landscape scale conservation activities in the Midwest.

JOIN THE EFFORT

Participation in MLI is voluntary and strategic. The hope is for conservation partners at every level to value MLI's framework and products and become engaged with the collaboration.

If your organization would like more information, please reach out to us using the "Contact Us" link on the MLI website. We look forward to collaborating with you on future projects.



FIND US ONLINE

MLIMidwest.org

