

West Virginia State Wildlife Action Plan

“What it is and How it Works”



2015 West Virginia

State Wildlife Action Plan

West Virginia Division of Natural Resources

September 1, 2015



West Virginia State Wildlife Action Plan

- For over 75 years federal excise taxes on hunting and fishing equipment have funded recovery of game fish and animals (\$7 Million Annually).
 - <5% of West Virginia species are game
- 2001 - Congress established State Wildlife Grant Program to help conserve the 95%.
- Requires states to develop State Wildlife Plans to guide their actions.
 - *First WV plan (2005) emphasized **Inventory and Monitoring**.*
 - *The 2015 plan emphasizes **Conservation Actions**.*

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How the Plan Works;

- Charts a course for conserving the diversity of fish and wildlife resources by emphasizing those species in greatest need of conservation.
- Targets funding and management actions to prevent fish and wildlife populations from declining to point of endangerment.
- Covers a **10 year span** in what is a *continuous adaptive management process* for conserving the state's fish and wildlife resources and the habitats that sustain them.

West Virginia State Wildlife Action Plan

Prepared By:

- DNR Wildlife Diversity Staff
- WVU Natural Resource Analysis Center Consulting Team
- With assistance of:
 - academic & other experts
 - Core Advisory Team from various agencies/organizations



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Eight Required Elements

- 1) **Lists and descriptions of SGCN** and natural communities, including their distributions and abundance.
- 2) Locations and conditions of **SGCN habitats**.
- 3) **Threats**, and necessary **research & survey** efforts.
- 4) Prioritized **conservation actions** that will address threats.
- 5) **Monitoring plans** for SGCN, habitats, and conservation action effectiveness.
- 6) Procedures for **reviewing & updating** the SWAP.
- 7) Description of **agency & organizational coordination** in plan development & implementation.
- 8) Description of **public coordination** in plan development & implementation.

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Our 10 Year Goal

- Halt the Decline of At-Risk Species
- Avoid Need for Federal Listing
- Recover Currently Listed Species and Allow for Delisting
- Keep Secure Species Secure
- Conserve the Full Array of Habitat Types and Biological Diversity in WV
- Develop management strategies through cooperative efforts with
 - Stakeholders, NGOs, landowners (private and public), and government agencies.

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- Landowners are not mandated by State or Federal Law to participate.
- *Collaboration and Cooperation* are emphasized over *Regulation*.
- These are **management recommendations** – with a common goal to protect and enhance:
 1. Wildlife Habitat
 2. Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN)



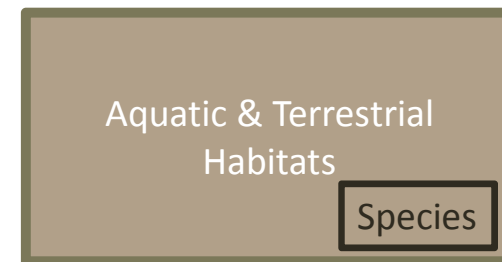
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Process of getting to where we are today

- Habitats Identified
- Species of Greatest Conservation Need Identified
 - > 600 animals
 - > 400 plants

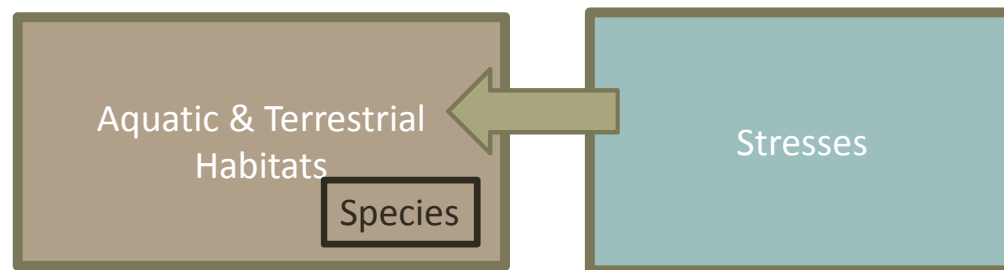
(plants not eligible for State Wildlife Grant funding)

*Many SGCN identified through 2005 Plan



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Stressors (Threats) Identified



21 Major Stresses on
Terrestrial Populations &
Habitats

20 Major Stresses on
Aquatic Populations and
Habitats

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Top Stresses on Terrestrial and Aquatic SGCNs and Habitats

Terrestrial

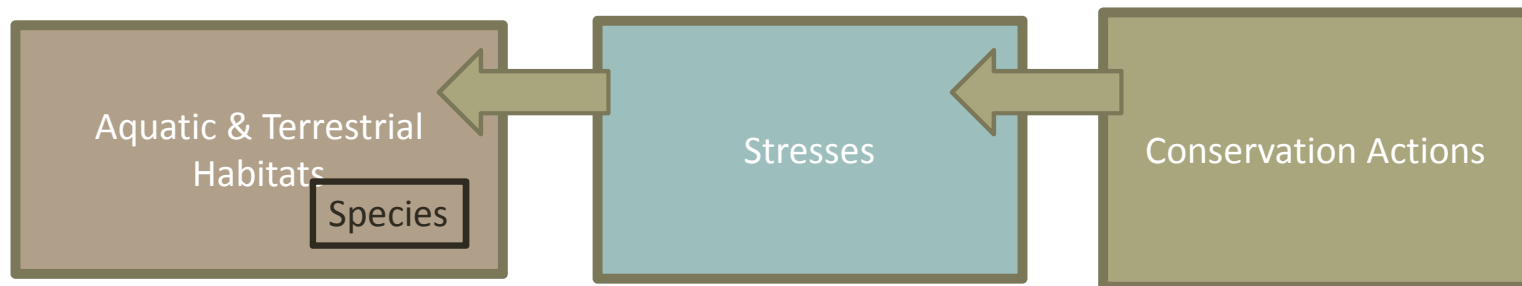
1. Invasive Non-native Species, Diseases
2. Roads and Railroads
3. Utility and Service Lines
4. Housing and Urban Areas
5. Recreational Activities

Aquatic

1. Industrial Effluent
2. Storms and Flooding
3. Invasive Non-native Species, Diseases
4. Roads and Railroads
5. Domestic and Urban Wastewater

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Conservation Actions Developed to Address Stresses Affecting SGCNs

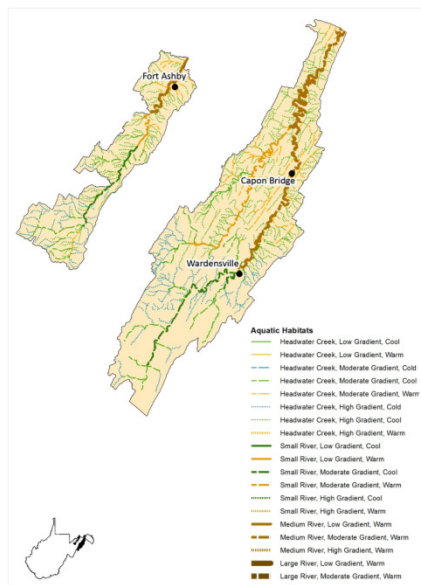


Actions are geographically linked through
Conservation Focus Areas (CFAs)

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Conservation Focus Areas

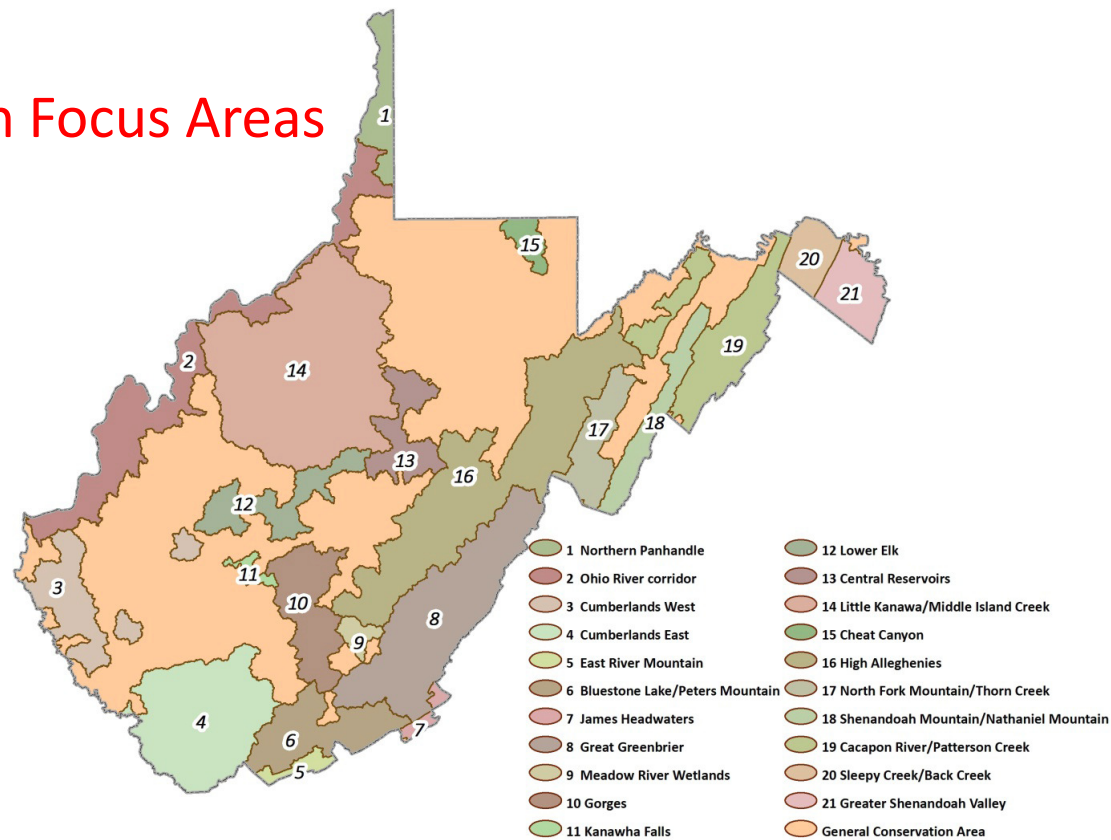
Cacapon River-Patterson Creek Conservation Focus Area



- Geographies where resources can be applied more effectively and efficiently
- Provide opportunities for leveraging successful outcomes
- Scale where intensive collaboration can occur

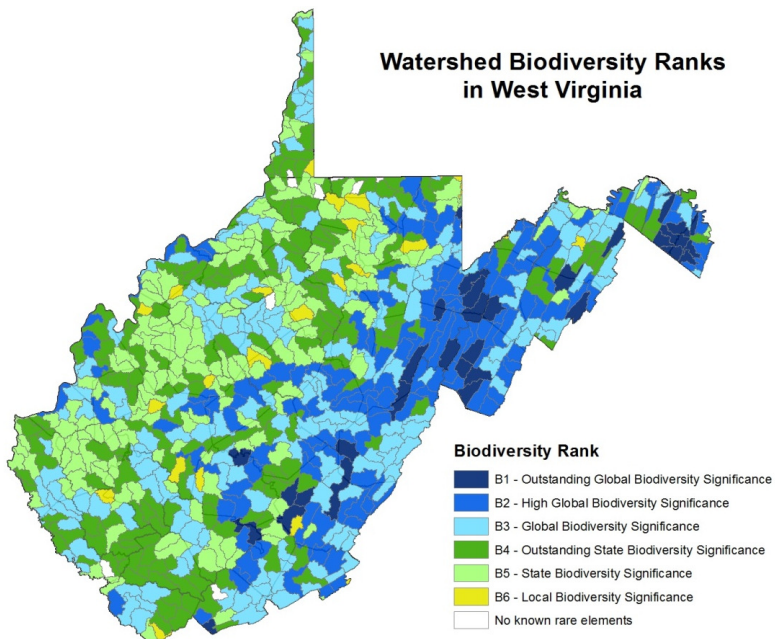
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21 Conservation Focus Areas

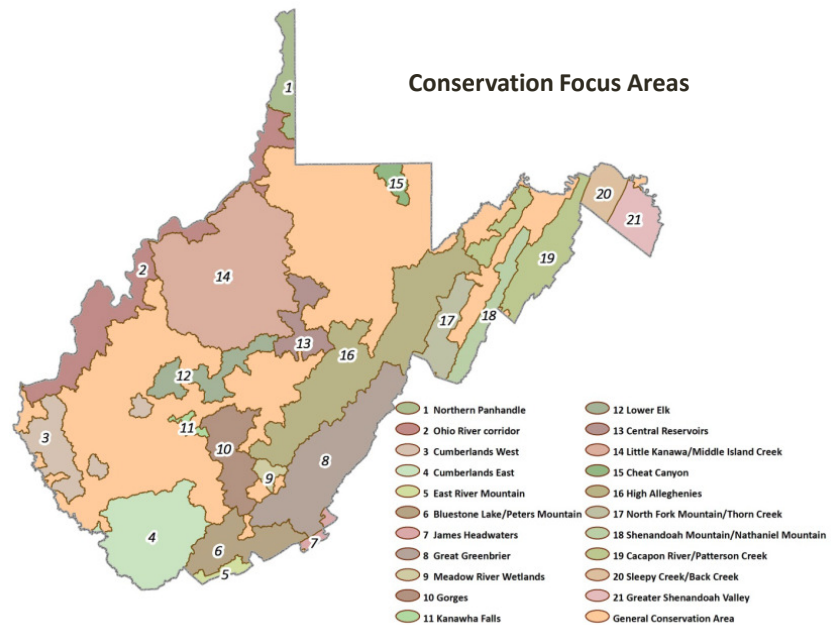


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**Watershed Biodiversity Ranks
in West Virginia**



Conservation Focus Areas



Public Outreach Efforts

= positive response

Public

- 30-Day Public Comment Period
- Open Houses (June)
- Social Media
 - Website, Face Book
- Interviews – several reporters
- Wonderful WV Magazine

NGOs/Stake Holders/Gov.

Internally –

- hosting quarterly Advisory Board meetings
- July – proposal reviewed with USFWS (Federal Aid)

Externally -

- 30-day comment period
- Letters of invitation
- Meetings (NRCS, USFS, MN Program, NPS, etc.)
- Two-day workshop (July)

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Next Step

Conservation Focus Area Plan Development

- CFA (Planning) – Spring/Summer 2016
- Identify Conservation Opportunities
- Identify Local Partners
- Begin 2016

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Outreach Efforts

- Meetings with Game Mgt., Fisheries, and Coordination Units
- Meetings with State and Federal Agencies (WV DEP, USFS, WV DoF, etc.)
- Meetings with Academics
- Meetings with NGOs and Partners



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Federal Aid –

State Wildlife Grants:

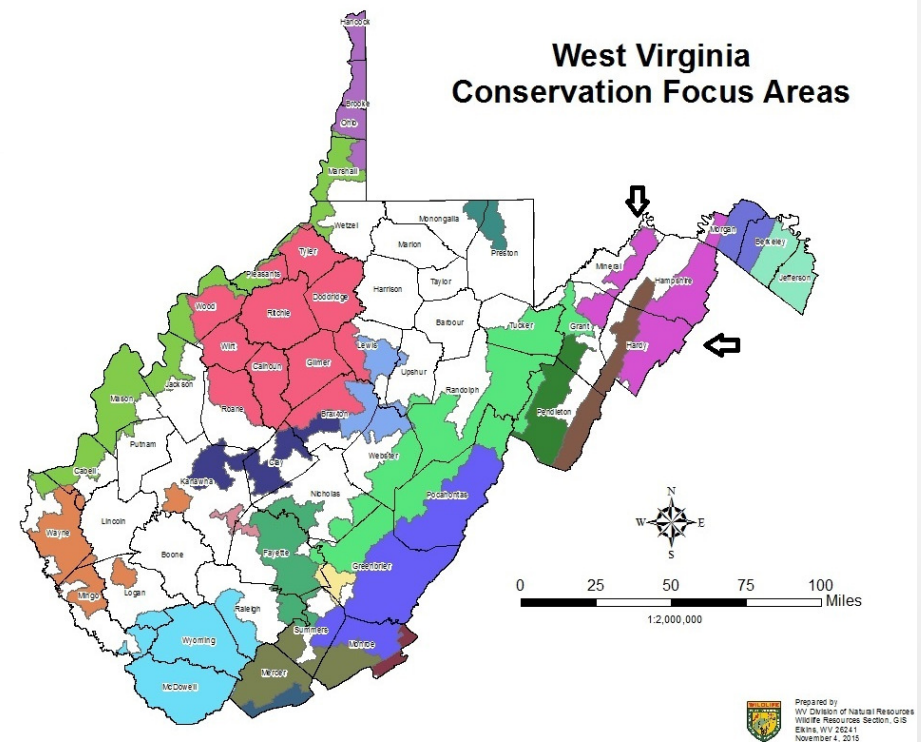
- Planning Grant (July 2016)
 - Identify CFAs and Working Groups
- Implementation
 - (current SWG and new grant in 2016).



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First Steps -

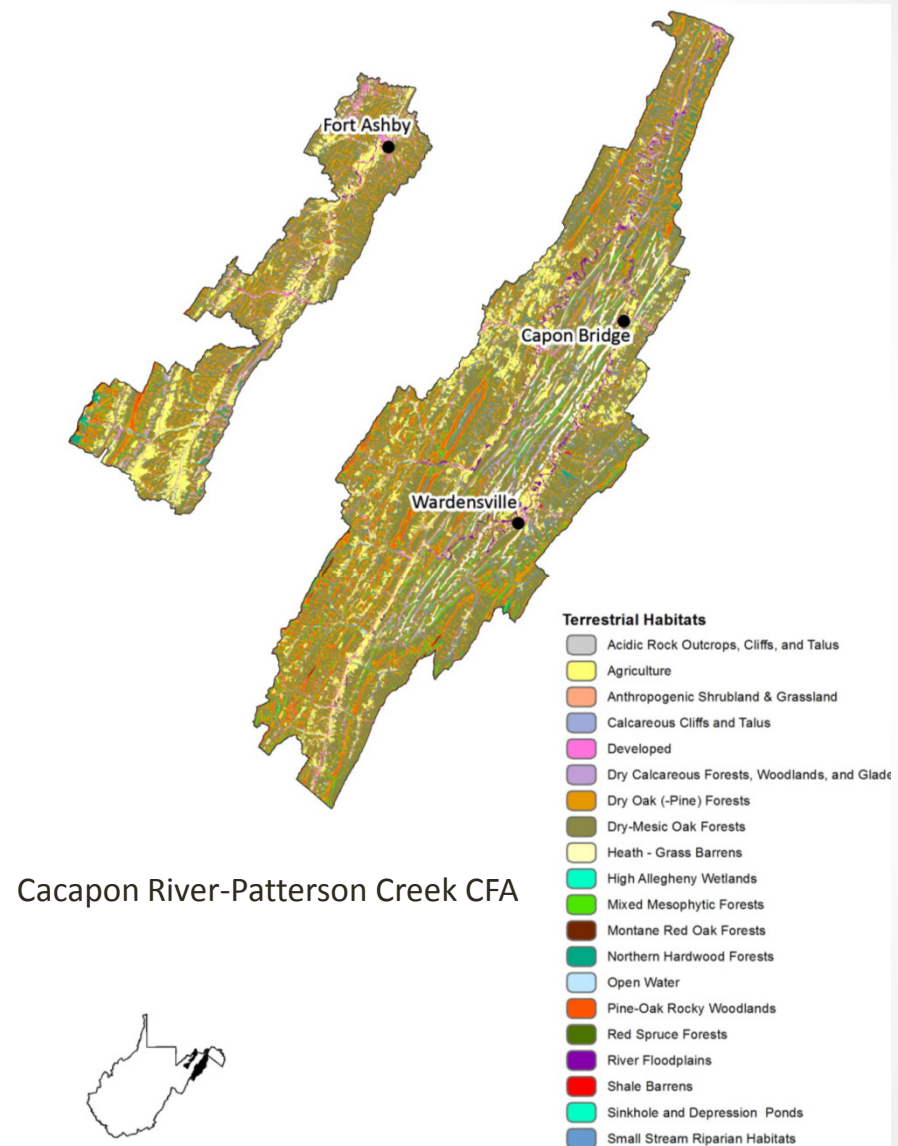
- Cacapon River and Patterson Creek CFA
WVDNR/Land Trust
- Great Greenbrier CFA – WVDNR staff
- The Gorges CFA – WVDNR/NPS



What Resources Do We Have?

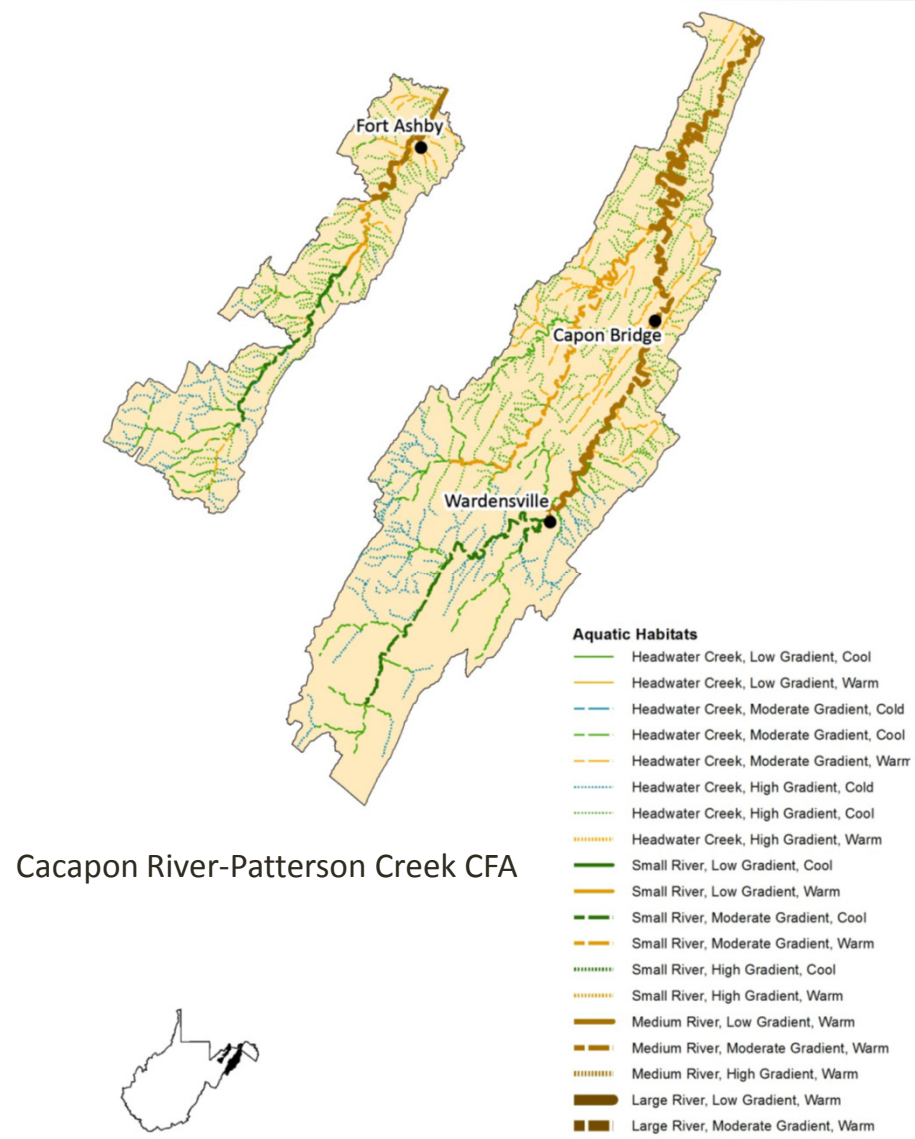
Terrestrial Habitats

- Northeast Terrestrial Habitat Classification System (NatureServe, Gawler 2008)
- Northeast Habitat Map (The Nature Conservancy, Ferree and Anderson 2013)



Aquatic Habitats

- Northeast Aquatic Habitat Classification System (The Nature Conservancy)



Distinctive Stresses (identified in the SWAP)

- Development pressure is significant in the Cacapon Watershed, with substantial *residential and second home development*, especially along major streams and adjacent to public land.
- *Water quality impacts* from agriculture and development exist throughout both watersheds.
- *Fragmenting intact forests* increases surface water temperatures (and consequently headwater stream temperatures) and storm water run-off.

Conservation Actions (identified in SWAP)

- **Promote practices** for restoring riparian habitat, including streamside fencing and establishing riparian buffers, and for reducing sedimentation and nutrient runoff from farms.
- **Coordinate with the active land trust and farmland protection community** to protect habitat through land conservation.
- **Engage public landowners** to maintain large, intact forest blocks thus protecting many other special habitats.
- **Engage conservation agencies** to implement a comprehensive plan to enhance climate change resiliency through reducing other stressors, identifying, maintaining and creating key habitat cores and corridors, and protecting areas of high landscape complexity and integrity.

Conservation Opportunities (Public Lands)

- George Washington National Forest
- Short Mountain Wildlife Management Area
- Edwards Run Wildlife Management Area
- Nathaniel Mountain Wildlife Management Area
- Sideling Hill Wildlife Management Area
- Cacapon State Park
- Lost River State Parks.

Conservation Opportunities (Key Partners)

Agencies:

- George Washington National Forest
- WV Division of Forestry
- WV DEP
- NRCS
- West Virginia Conservation Agency
- County Farmland Protection Boards

NGO's

- The Lost River and Cacapon Land Trust
- Friends of the Cacapon
- The Cacapon Institute
- Potomac Conservancy

Cacapon River-Patterson Creek CFA (Where do we go from here?)

Tasks:

- Further Define Species Groups, Species Habitat Associations, etc.
- Identify Sources of the Stresses (Landowners, Activities)
- Identify What Stresses Can Be Acted On
- Define and Refine Needed Conservation Actions
- Link Conservation Actions with Partners



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View the State Wildlife Action Plan at wvdnr.gov

Open Discussion

