

USFWS Refuges and USGS/GAP Memorandum of Agreement

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During the period of 2004-2009, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) maintained an interagency agreement with the USGS GAP Analysis Program (GAP) for the development of spatial data tools and processes necessary to conduct landscape level planning at various scales. The purpose of the agreement was to cooperatively develop the process and capacity that enables the Service to establish science-based conservation goals and habitat based objectives to meet its' cross programmatic resource needs. This agreement allowed for pilot efforts by the FWS in using the regional GAP data for Region 1 to determine how well, and how efficiently, the data can be used to guide management of Refuge and other programs administered in Region 1. The assessment involved FWS staff engaging in data evaluation and assessing data usefulness for landscape level wildlife habitat analysis, in particular for Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plans.

GAP data and information has the potential to help inform and formulate Refuge management decisions and prioritize strategic growth in the National Wildlife Refuge System based on scientifically sound principles of ecosystem and biodiversity conservation. Funding provided through the MOA facilitated outreach to educate USFWS staff and exchange information about GAP products, conduct analyses for the USFWS NWRS and other USFWS programs, and to help integrate GAP data into the development of conservation goals and objectives for landscape level planning. To this end informational meetings and presentations were organized and other informational products and services (intranet site, FTP downloads, email updates) were set-up to provide relevant data and information on the GAP landcover and species distribution modeling/mapping process and data products.

Description of Projects

- Coordinated with FWS programs to develop scientifically based FWS focus areas for Strategic Habitat Conservation (SHC) and land protection planning.
- Conducted analysis using Northwest Regional GAP (NWGAP) data (Landcover, Stewardship, and Species Models) for Region 1 NWRS; A pilot to look at the new NWGAP data and analyze the landcover types on refuges and their overall representation in their ecoregions and the Pacific Region as a whole.

Goals for Next Year and Future Collaboration Opportunities between USFWS and GAP

- Identify NWRS Priority Systems and Quantify Potential Habitat Gains and Losses on Refuges due to Climate Change and Biome Shifts.
- Cooperative Conservation, Where Should We Partner for Resilience and Redundancy for Priority Systems and Adaptive Management.
- Wildlife/Habitat Corridor Study for Land Conservation Cooperatives (LCC), Strategic Habitat Conservation (SHC) and Strategic Growth.
- Vulnerability Assessments of Refuge Water Resources and the Potential Impacts to Refuges.
- A refinement of Fish and Wildlife Service priority geographic areas, termed Land Conservation Cooperatives and Refuges priority ecoregions (SHC focus areas) based on Refuge Priority Species and Habitats, Resource of Concern Habitat and Population Objectives, Species Richness and Biodiversity, and Connectivity.

- Provided outreach and support for USFWS programs and staff, as well as USFWS partners, which are interested in using GAP products for landscape level analysis.
- Used GAP in Landbird Biological Objective-Setting: Developing Process and Examples from Oak Habitats in the Pacific Northwest.