



# STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2023





## CRUCIAL HABITAT ASSESSMENT TOOL

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**CHAT is an Initiative of THE Western Association of fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA)**

**Member Agencies**

Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
Arizona Game and Fish Department  
Colorado Parks and Wildlife  
Idaho Department of Fish and Game  
Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism  
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks  
Nebraska Game and Parks Commission  
Nevada Department of Wildlife  
New Mexico Department of Game and Fish  
Oklahoma Dept. of Wildlife Conservation  
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife  
South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks  
Texas Parks & Wildlife Department  
Utah Division of Wildlife Resources  
Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife  
Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Cover Photo: Pearl Lake, Colorado, Photo Credit Wayne D. Lewis

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## WAFWA's Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool

mission is to deliver data-driven solutions as a non-regulatory, decision support system of state fish and wildlife agency priorities to aid proactive decision-making during the pre-planning stages of land-use projects that could affect crucial habitats.

*wafwachat.org*



Dragon Fly, TX  
Texas Parks and Wildlife

# STRATEGIC GOALS

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**GOAL 1**

WAFWA's Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool (CHAT) is the most credible data source on crucial wildlife habitats and important wildlife corridors across the western North American landscape.

**GOAL 2**

CHAT delivers a wildlife conservation tool designed to provide the public easy access to location-based information on State fish and wildlife agency conservation priorities by offering a geospatial decision support system to aid proactive land-use planning.

**GOAL 3**

Utilization of CHAT promotes the incorporation of state-based wildlife conservation values in large-scale land use planning to provide healthy and productive landscapes.

## Goal 1

WAFWA's Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool (CHAT) is the most credible data source on crucial wildlife habitats and important wildlife corridors across the western North American landscape.

*In 2013, state wildlife agencies and their partners across the western landscape implemented CHAT as a shared vision of providing the public with a non-regulatory, online tool to relay credible and consistent information about crucial wildlife habitats and important wildlife corridors. This unique collaboration of subject matter experts and policy leaders made a long-term commitment to provide CHAT with the best science available.*

**OUTCOME 1.1** - Participating western states and territories are committed to ensuring CHAT reflects best available scientific data, state-vetted on crucial wildlife habitats and important wildlife corridors.

### Actions

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| Data Credibility | 1.1.1 Foster <b>collaboration</b> between WAFWA and participating state wildlife agencies to ensure CHAT remains a coordinated, state-led effort. |
|                  | 1.1.2 Ensure <b>consistency</b> in CHAT messaging (vision/goals/services), data, terminology, and processes.                                      |
|                  | 1.1.3 Provide <b>transparency</b> with funding, supporters, data sources and methodology.   |
|                  | 1.1.4 Promote <b>understandability</b> of complex scientific data and processes for easy use by the public.                                       |
|                  | 1.1.5 Ensure <b>relevancy</b> by striving to deliver the best state-vetted scientific data available.   |



**OUTCOME 1.2** - Expand CHAT's membership and geographic coverage by adding western states and provinces. Currently, 15 states within WAFWA actively participate in the CHAT initiative.

### Actions

|        |   |
|--------|---|
| Expand | 1.2.1 Actively <b>engage</b> potential members through outreach and collaborative efforts.            |
|        | 1.2.2 Develop a <b>strategy</b> and onboarding process to facilitate new member states and provinces. |
|        | 1.2.3 Celebrate <b>success</b> with internal and external media announcements.                        |

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**OUTCOME 1.3** - Expand crucial wildlife habitat and important wildlife corridor data sources by working with WAFWA and Federal Partners, Land Trusts or NGOs involved in landscape conservation.

### Actions

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| Expand | 1.3.1 Build <b>partnerships</b> that can result in new data sources that meet CHAT goals and objectives.             |
|        | 1.3.2 Develop a <b>framework</b> that promotes and allows for incorporation of new data sources.                     |
|        | 1.3.3 Reflect the <b>best scientific data</b> currently available on wildlife resources and conservation priorities. |



## Goal 2

CHAT delivers a wildlife conservation tool designed to provide the public easy access to location-based information on State fish and wildlife agency conservation priorities by offering a geospatial decision support system to aid proactive land-use planning.

**OUTCOME 2.1** - The CHAT user-interface matches the extent of our customer's technological expertise to stay on pace with them and with advancements in technology.

### Actions

|         |  |
|---------|--|
| Deliver | 2.1.1 Routinely <b>monitor and evaluate</b> CHAT's user experience to guide improvements and new features. |
|         | 2.1.2 Ensure <b>easy access</b> and utilization of CHAT decision support features and data sources.        |
|         | 2.1.3 Foster <b>technological advancements</b> to the web-interface to keep up with emerging technology.   |
|         | 2.1.4 Seek new and creative <b>funding sources</b> to provide for technology advancement and growth.       |

## Goal 3

Utilization of CHAT promotes the incorporation of state-based wildlife conservation values in large-scale land use planning to provide healthy and productive landscapes.

**OUTCOME 3.1** – Widespread and effective use of CHAT results in increased health and productivity of crucial habitats across the western landscape.

### Actions

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Implement | 3.1.1 Improve <b>visibility</b> of CHAT through in-reach and outreach to strengthen utilization.  |
|           | 3.1.2 Develop <b>case studies</b> of implementation to showcase successes from traditional and non-traditional uses of the decision support tools and its data. |
|           | 3.1.3 Track and <b>promote successes</b> to demonstrate the effectiveness of the Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool in meeting its goals and objectives.           |

Burrowing Owl, OR  
Oregon Dept of Fish and Wildlife - Keith Kohl







## WAFWA's Vision for CHAT

WAFWA's vision for the future of the west includes healthy and productive landscapes with interconnected networks of large natural areas supporting viable populations of fish and wildlife (crucial habitats). WAFWA's vision includes the incorporation of CHAT into all landscape scale project planning across the west, realizing the goal of keeping common species common and improving the status of federally listed threatened and endangered species. WAFWA's goal for CHAT is to support, promote, and enhance a nationally recognized and widely used, state-based wildlife conservation tool that provides a roadmap for developing the west in an economically and environmentally viable way using the most up-to-date, credible, and defensible wildlife data and analysis. In addition, CHAT is a tool that provides guidance for priority conservation investment. WAFWA believes it is essential that the CHAT continue to advance in terms of technology, service, data, and content improvement.



## CRUCIAL HABITAT ASSESSMENT TOOL

# CONTACT

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