

# AN ASSESSMENT OF ILLINOIS CONSERVATION OPPORTUNITY AREAS

*Stakeholders' perspectives on conservation  
planning, implementation, and threats*

**FINAL REPORT  
AUGUST 2009**

**By**

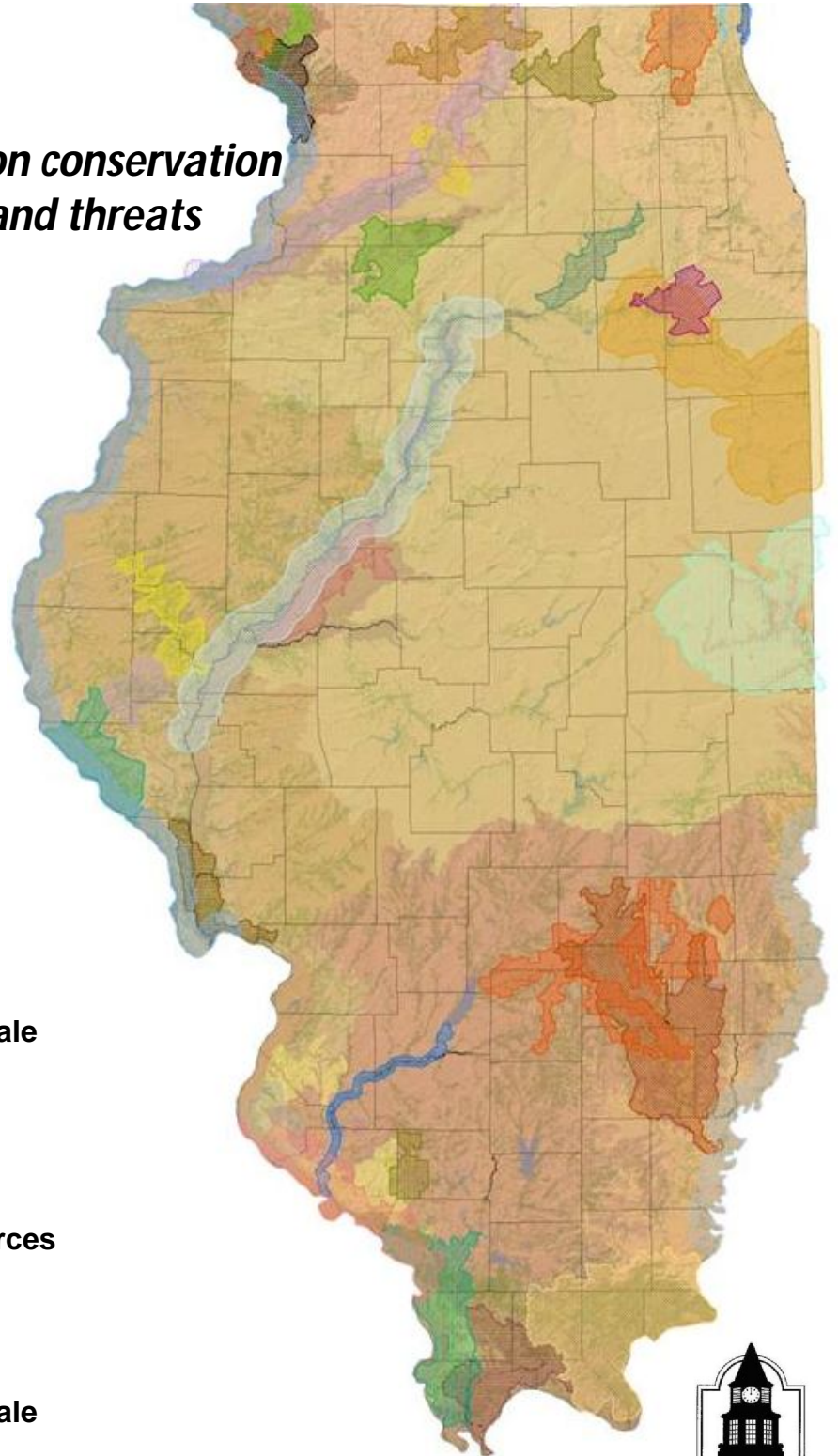
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Prepared for the Illinois Department of Natural Resources  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part of the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan developed in 2005, thirty-two Conservation Opportunity Areas (COAs) were recognized across the state as priority areas for conserving Illinois' species in greatest need of conservation (IDNR 2005). COA boundaries were developed based upon the presence of important habitats and fish and wildlife resources, as well as guidance from stakeholder participants in workshops.

The overall intent of this survey is to establish a general snapshot of the status of COA planning in Illinois and to provide direction for COA coordination and planning efforts in the future. The intent is not to be critical of any individual COA, nor its planning and implementation accomplishments. COAs clearly vary in their conservation planning environments; opportunities and constraints are diverse across the state. The survey also provides insight into conservation needs throughout Illinois, as COAs serve as indicators of ecological health and the status of conservation efforts.

The IDNR, TNC and SIUC have teamed up to provide communication and coordination support to local partners in the COAs. This survey is a first step towards identifying and detailing the conditions in COAs to allow for targeted assistance from these entities. Six basic research questions (see below) provided the framework for the report, along with valuable insights offered by stakeholders as additional comments. Summary results are presented along with each question.

1. Who are the stakeholders represented in the survey?
  - Most stakeholders were from state agencies.
  - Each COA was represented in the survey.
2. What is the overall status of planning in the COAs?
  - Approximately 2/3 of stakeholders knew of a resource management plan and data collection efforts within their COA.
  - Resource Management Plans were viewed as somewhat effective by most stakeholders.
3. What are important factors for success in COA resource management planning?
  - Funding (and equipment)
  - Volunteers and staff
  - Community and landowner support
4. What are stakeholders' expectations for the future of COAs?
  - Positive media attention was rated as the most likely to occur.
  - Completion of a resource management plan was rated as the least likely to occur.
  - Most stakeholders believed it would take 1-3 years to see positive benefits for wildlife and/or important habitats
5. What are conservation priorities in COAs?
  - Restoration and enhancement of wetlands
  - Improvement of forests and savannas
  - Protect and improve near and in-stream habitat
6. What are the biggest threats to COAs?
  - Invasive Species
  - Degrading habitat quality
  - Loss of habitat and changing land use
7. How important are certain conditions to planning and implementation in COAs? How satisfied are stakeholders with these conditions?
  - Funding for COA projects and partners with a shared vision are the most important conditions.
  - Partners with a shared vision was the condition with which stakeholders were most satisfied.

- Funding for COA projects and strong leadership from natural resource management agencies were conditions that stakeholders deem as important, but were low on the satisfaction scale.

#### 8. Additional Comments from Stakeholders

- Included comments on the COA boundaries, changing land use, private landowner support, the engagement of partners and the public, and issues with implementation and agency support.

A summary of findings for each individual COA are provided to highlight the diverse needs and strengths of these areas across the state, especially in reference to the first three criteria developed by the IL-WAP for COA designation:

1. wildlife and habitat resources of statewide importance
2. partners willing to be involved,
3. financial and human resources

The fourth criterion developed by the IDNR is that a COA must have an agreed-upon conservation purpose and set of objectives. Currently, representatives of the IDNR are pursuing partnership statements of all stakeholders involved in individual COAs to ensure this criterion is met.

The results of this survey provide additional information regarding the diversity among Illinois' COAs. The data show specific areas where assistance is needed and highlight COAs that require targeted support. Hill Prairie Corridor-South Section emerged as a leader in many conditions associated with effective planning and implementation. This COA appears to be particularly strong in fostering leadership and developing a shared vision among its partners. In resource management plan effectiveness, Hill Prairie Corridor-North Section and Cache River-Cypress Creek COAs were standouts. In contrast, the Wabash River was revealed as a COA in need of support.

As the IDNR, TNC and SIUC work in partnership with COAs, monitoring and evaluation will remain important. The views of all stakeholders including those of local community members and landowners should be assessed as progress is made in COA planning and implementation.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Thanks to David Day of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission and Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and Jeff Walk of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) for providing valuable insight on survey design and instrument development. Funding for this project was provided by a State Wildlife Grant (US Fish and Wildlife Service), the Nature Conservancy, and Southern Illinois University, Carbondale.

## STUDY PURPOSE

This report summarizes the results of the 2009 Conservation Opportunity Area Survey conducted by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC), and The Nature Conservancy (TNC). The survey was designed to gather information about the 32 Conservation Opportunity Areas (COAs) designated in the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan (IL-WAP) as priority areas for conserving Illinois' species in greatest need of conservation (IDNR 2005). COA boundaries were developed based upon the presence of important habitats, fish and wildlife, as well as guidance from stakeholder participants in workshops (Appendix A).

A COA is described as an area with

- wildlife and habitat resources of statewide importance,
- partners willing to be involved
- financial and human resources
- an agreed-upon conservation purpose and set of objectives

The IL-WAP provides general information on each COA, as it was available, including individual partnerships, conservation goals, key actions, protected lands, and priority resources (IDNR 2005). The IDNR, TNC and SIUC have teamed up to provide communication and coordination support to local partners in the COAs. This survey was a first step towards identifying and detailing the conditions in COAs to allow for targeted assistance from these agencies.

The primary objectives of the survey were to

1. identify and collect information from stakeholders involved in the COAs
2. identify the overall status of planning in COAs
3. establish factors important to the success of resource management plans in COAs
4. examine stakeholder expectations for the future of COAs
5. determine conservation priorities and key threats in COAs
6. determine important conditions and gauge the level of satisfaction with current conditions in COAs
7. provide an opportunity for feedback from stakeholders

The overall intent of this survey is to establish a general snapshot of the status of COA planning in Illinois and to provide direction for COA coordination and planning support efforts into the future. The intent is not to be critical of any individual COA nor its planning and implementation accomplishments. COAs clearly vary in their conservation planning environments; opportunities and constraints are diverse across the state. The survey also provides insight into conservation needs throughout Illinois, as COAs serve as indicators of ecological health and the status of conservation efforts.

## STUDY DESIGN

### Survey Design

Development of the survey began in November 2008 and involved participants from the IDNR Office of Resource Conservation, TNC and SIUC. The resulting survey instrument included closed and open-ended questions producing quantitative and qualitative data (Appendix B). The instrument was reviewed and pretested by the research team including SIUC, IDNR, and TNC representatives. The survey design and data collection protocol were approved by SIUC's Human Subject's Committee.

### Sampling Techniques

Targeted respondents were individuals with knowledge of conservation activities within or near designated COAs including government (state and federal) employees, individuals working for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and individuals from the IDNR involved in writing the IL-WAP. Approximately 275 individuals were contacted via e-mail (Appendix C) and invited to participate in the study on May 6<sup>th</sup> 2009. Data were collected through an internet-based survey program available through Survey Monkey (SurveyMonkey.com) from May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2009 to July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2009. To increase participation, respondents were sent two reminder e-mails on June 8<sup>th</sup> and June 30<sup>th</sup> (Appendix D). Participation in the

survey was voluntary and permanent data were not linked to individual identifying information so as to protect respondents' confidentiality.

Respondents were asked at the beginning of the survey (question 3) to select one COA for which they could "provide insight regarding the area's status and potential for conservation opportunities." Individuals could take the survey for up to three different COAs. As a result, the number of responses to the survey overall is not equivalent to the number of *unique* respondents. However, all responses associated with a particular COA represent unique stakeholders.

### Data Analysis

Data were downloaded from the database in raw and summary form. Open-ended responses were categorized and grouped by theme and coded to allow for quantitative content analysis. Data analysis consisted of basic descriptive statistics using Microsoft Excel<sup>®</sup> version 2007. Responses of "unsure" or "N/A" were coded as missing data when calculating means and standard deviations. Data analysis was conducted on the entire response sample and on responses grouped by individual COAs.

## FINDINGS

The results reported are based on 209 completed surveys. Each of the COAs was represented in the survey. Sixteen individuals initiated but did not complete the survey. A response rate was not calculated because individuals could complete the survey multiple times for different COAs and unique respondents were not tracked. Study findings presented below include results from the entire response sample for all 32 COAs and when appropriate, results from responses grouped by individual COAs.

### 1. Who are the stakeholders represented in the survey?

Over half of the COA stakeholders were affiliated with a state agency and 20% were affiliated with a NGO (Table 1). Private stakeholders (landowners and non-landowners) represented the smallest group of stakeholders at 1% each. Individuals were invited to provide any references for COA resource management plans and data collection or monitoring efforts.

Table 1. Stakeholders represented in the survey

<b>Response Options</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
State agency	103	51.5
Non-governmental organization	40	20.0
Other <sup>a</sup>	32	16.0
University/research institution	12	6.0
Federal agency	9	4.5
Private stakeholder (landowner)	2	1.0
Private stakeholder (non-landowner)	2	1.0
Total	200	

<sup>a</sup>Other responses included local government, not-for-profit conservation groups and resource managers.

Source: question 1

Each COA was represented at least once in the surveys collected, though the number of surveys completed for each COA varied. The COA with the most response was the Middle Illinois River with 24 completed surveys. The Vermillion River and Kankakee Sands had 19 and 15 completed surveys, respectively. Siloam Springs and Sinkhole Plain each had only one survey completed.

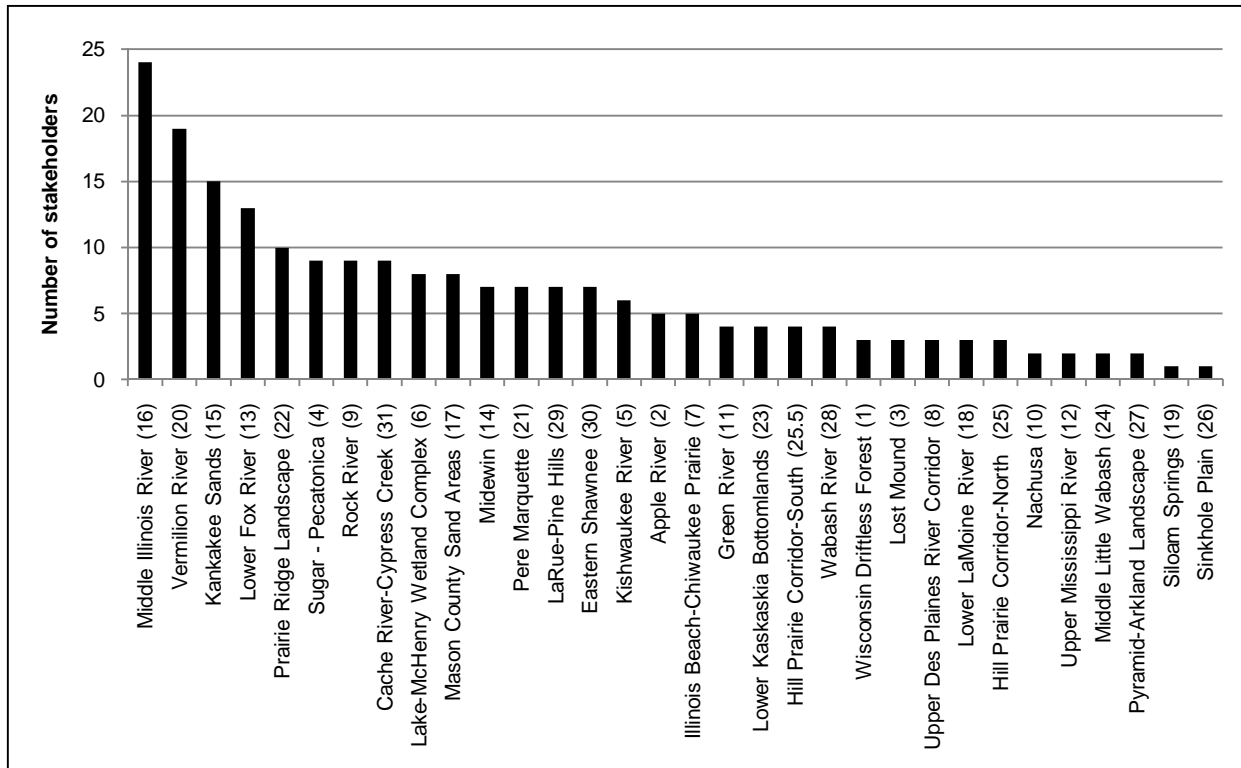


Figure 1. Number of stakeholders for each COA (COA ID number)  
Source: question 3

## 2. What is the overall status of planning in the COAs?

To gain a better understanding of the overall status of COA planning efforts, stakeholders were asked about their awareness of a resource management plan and monitoring efforts, as well as their perceptions of the effectiveness of the plan. Most stakeholders (66%) were aware of a resource management plan in the COA and almost every respondent who knew of a resource management plan also knew of data collection and monitoring efforts underway (Table 2).

Table 2. Awareness of a resource management plan and data collection/monitoring

Response Options	Resource Management Plan		Data collection/ monitoring efforts	
	N	%	N	%
Yes	129	65.5	119	63.3
No	68	34.5	69	36.7
Total	197		188	

Source: question 4

Stakeholders were asked to rate the effectiveness of the resource management plan in the COAs on a scale from 1 (extremely ineffective) to 5 (extremely effective). Overall, resource management plans were viewed by most stakeholders to be “somewhat effective” in managing or protecting fish, wildlife and important habitats (Table 3). More than a quarter of stakeholders were “unsure” about the effectiveness of the plan in the COA and 12% or fewer perceived the plan to be “extremely effective.”

Table 3. Effectiveness of resource management plans

Effectiveness	managing/protecting fish and wildlife		managing/protecting important habitats	
	N	%	N	%
Extremely ineffective	6	4.1	7	4.8
Somewhat ineffective	7	4.8	8	5.4
Neither ineffective or effective	7	4.8	4	2.7
Somewhat effective	75	51.0	72	49.0
Extremely effective	12	8.2	18	12.2
Unsure	40	27.2	38	25.9
Total	147		147	

Source: questions 8 and 9

Effectiveness ratings for resource management plans were averaged for each COA (Table 4). Overall, resource management plans in the Hill Prairie Corridor-North Section and Cache River-Cypress Creek COA were rated the most effective while plans in the Mason County Sand Areas and the Pyramid-Arkland Landscape COAs were rated the least effective. Stakeholders of the Green River and Wabash River COAs were unsure regarding the effectiveness of their resource management plans.

Table 4. Effectiveness of resource management plans within COAs<sup>1</sup>

COA	Managing and protecting fish and wildlife			Managing and protecting important habitats		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Hill Prairie Corridor-North Section	2	4.50	0.71	2	4.50	0.71
Cache River-Cypress Creek	5	4.40	0.55	5	4.40	0.55
Sugar - Pecatonica	3	4.33	0.58	3	4.00	0.00
Hill Prairie Corridor-South Section	3	4.33	0.58	3	4.33	0.58
Eastern Shawnee	3	4.33	0.58	3	4.33	0.58
LaRue-Pine Hills	7	4.14	0.69	7	4.14	0.69
Wisconsin Driftless Forest	2	4.00	0.00	2	4.50	0.71
Apple River	2	4.00	0.00	2	4.50	0.71
Nachusa	1	4.00	-	1	4.00	-
Upper Mississippi River	2	4.00	0.00	2	3.00	1.41
Midewin	4	4.00	0.00	5	4.00	0.00
Kankakee Sands	6	4.00	0.00	6	3.83	1.47
Siloam Springs	1	4.00	-	1	4.00	-
Pere Marquette	3	4.00	0.00	3	4.00	0.00
Lower Kaskaskia Bottomlands	1	4.00	-	4	4.25	0.50
Sinkhole Plain	1	4.00	-	1	4.00	-
Kishwaukee River	6	3.83	0.41	6	3.83	0.41
Lower LaMoine River	3	3.67	0.58	3	3.67	0.58
Vermilion River	8	3.63	1.06	7	3.86	0.90
Prairie Ridge Landscape	8	3.63	1.41	8	3.63	1.41
Lake-McHenry Wetland Complex	5	3.60	0.89	5	3.60	0.89
Middle Illinois River	7	3.57	0.79	8	4.13	0.35
Lost Mound	2	3.50	0.71	2	2.50	2.12
Illinois Beach-Chiwaukee Prairie	2	3.50	0.71	2	2.50	2.12
Rock River	7	3.43	1.40	7	3.57	1.13
Lower Fox River	3	3.00	1.73	4	3.25	1.50
Middle Little Wabash	2	3.00	0.00	2	3.00	0.00
Upper Des Plaines River Corridor	2	2.50	2.12	2	2.50	2.12
Mason County Sand Areas	3	2.00	1.73	3	2.67	2.08
Pyramid-Arkland Landscape	1	2.00	-	1	2.00	-

<sup>1</sup>Rated on a scale from 1 to 5, with one being "not at all effective" and 5 being "extremely effective."

Source: questions 8 and 9

### 3. What are important indicators of success in COA resource management planning?

To identify what makes a resource management plan effective, stakeholders were asked to list up to three important factors that contributed to the success of the resource management plan and reduced the success of the resource management plan (Figure 2). Responses were coded and categorized according to the primary theme of each response (Appendix E and Appendix F). Altogether, funding and equipment appear to be the most important indicator of resource management plan success, followed by personnel or volunteers and community or landowner support. According to stakeholders, while the presence of community or landowner support has the highest potential to increase the likelihood of success (27%), a lack of funding has the highest potential to reduce the likelihood of success (53%).

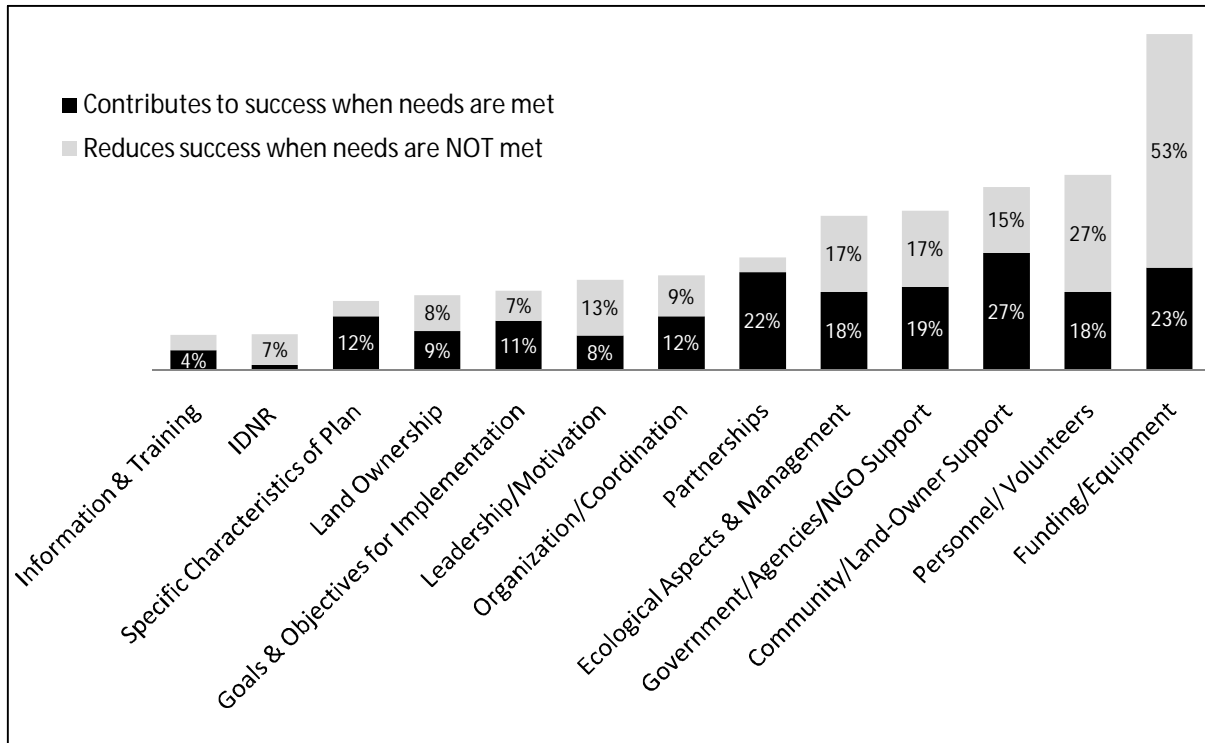


Figure 2. Percent of stakeholders listing factors contributing to or reducing the success of resource management plans. Where percents are not shown, the factor was listed by < 4% of stakeholders. Source: questions 10 and 11, open response

#### 4. What are stakeholders' expectations for the future of COAs?

Stakeholders were asked about their expectations for various events or conditions occurring in COAs in the future. Respondents rated the likelihood of six key positive events/conditions occurring over the next 2-3 years on a scale from 1 (extremely unlikely) to 5 (extremely likely) (Table 5). On average, each of the events or conditions was rated as somewhat likely to occur. Positive media attention was rated as the most likely to occur (3.79) while the completion of a resource management plan was rated as the least likely to occur (3.53). Over 70% of stakeholders believed that positive media attention and local interest and commitment is likely (somewhat or extremely) to occur. Almost 70% of stakeholders believed that tangible progress towards implementing the resource management plan was likely to occur in three years of plan completion. When asked how long it would take to see benefits for fish, wildlife and important habitats in the COA, stakeholders were most likely to respond 1-3 years (Figure 3).

Table 5. Likelihood of positive events according to stakeholders

Event	N	Mean	SD	Percent of responses by category				
				extremely unlikely	some-what unlikely	neither likely or unlikely	some-what likely	extremely likely
Positive media attention around conservation initiatives over the next three years.	128	3.79	1.11	6.3	8.6	10.2	50.0	25.0
Local interest and commitment to conservation initiatives; support from local landowners.	124	3.77	1.07	4.8	10.5	10.5	50.8	23.4
Tangible progress towards implementing the resource management plan within three years of plan completion.	116	3.70	1.22	6.0	16.4	8.6	39.7	29.3
Active local outreach programs.	124	3.68	1.19	5.6	16.1	8.9	43.5	25.8
Documented, measurable benefits for habitat or fish and wildlife populations over the next three years.	127	3.68	1.17	3.9	18.9	9.4	40.9	26.8
A resource management plan for this COA or adjacent areas will be completed within the next two years.	105	3.53	1.25	8.6	15.2	14.3	38.1	23.8

Source: question 12

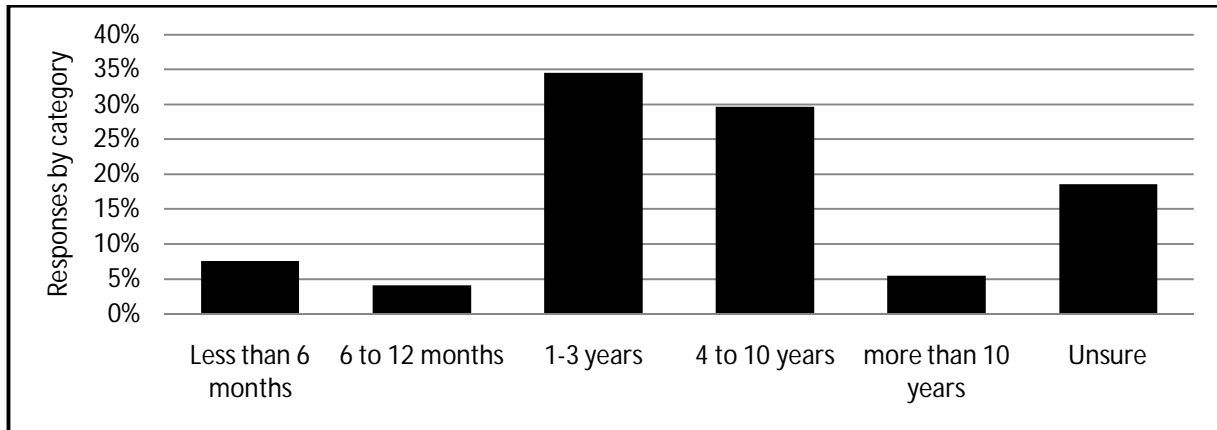


Figure 3. Expected timeframe for benefits to fish, wildlife and important habitats  
Source: question 13

Within individual COAs, the likelihood of positive events occurring varied. Mean likelihood ratings were calculated for each COA (Table 6). The mean likelihood of all positive events was also averaged for each COA. Data analysis revealed Hill Prairie Corridor-South Section (5.00) and Sinkhole Plain (5.00) were the most likely to experience these positive events according to their stakeholders. Stakeholders in the Wabash River, Lost Mound and Pyramid-Arkland Landscape COAs believe their COAs to be the least likely to experience these positive events with means of 2.64, 2.47 and 1.83 respectively.

Table 6. Mean likelihood of individual events and average of all events within COAs<sup>1,2</sup>

Positive Event COA	Plan <sup>a</sup>		Progress <sup>b</sup>		Interest <sup>c</sup>		Outreach <sup>d</sup>		Media <sup>e</sup>		Benefits <sup>f</sup>		AVG
	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	
Hill Prairie Corridor-South Section	2	5.00	3	5.00	3	5.00	3	5.00	3	5.00	3	5.00	5.00
Sinkhole Plain	1	5.00	1	5.00	1	5.00	1	5.00	1	5.00	1	5.00	5.00
Nachusa	1	5.00	1	5.00	1	4.00	1	5.00	1	4.00	1	5.00	4.67
Wisconsin Driftless Forest	1	4.00	2	4.50	2	4.50	2	4.50	2	5.00	2	4.50	4.50
Siloam Springs	1	4.00	1	5.00	1	5.00	1	4.00	1	4.00	1	5.00	4.50
Lower LaMoine River	2	4.50	3	5.00	3	4.33	3	4.33	3	3.67	2	4.50	4.39
Vermilion River	6	4.50	6	4.33	5	4.60	5	4.40	6	4.50	7	3.86	4.37
Illinois Beach-Chiwaukeee Prairie	3	4.00	3	4.33	3	4.67	3	4.33	3	4.00	3	4.33	4.28
Upper Des Plaines River Corr.	2	3.50	3	3.67	3	4.33	3	4.33	2	4.50	2	4.50	4.14
Eastern Shawnee	3	4.33	5	4.00	5	4.20	5	4.20	5	4.00	5	4.00	4.12
LaRue-Pine Hills	3	4.33	3	4.00	5	4.20	6	3.67	6	4.17	6	4.33	4.12
Lake-McHenry Wetland Com.	4	2.75	4	3.50	4	4.75	4	4.75	5	3.80	5	4.00	3.93
Upper Mississippi River	2	4.50	2	3.50	2	4.50	2	4.50	2	4.00	2	2.50	3.92
Lower Kaskaskia Bottomlands	2	4.50	4	3.50	4	3.50	4	4.25	4	4.00	4	3.75	3.92
Midewin	2	3.00	4	3.75	5	3.80	5	3.80	5	4.20	5	4.60	3.86
Kishwaukee River	5	4.40	5	4.00	6	3.83	6	3.67	6	3.83	5	3.40	3.86
Middle Illinois River	7	3.71	8	4.13	10	3.50	8	3.75	9	4.44	10	3.50	3.84
Lower Fox River	5	3.40	4	3.75	6	3.83	6	4.00	6	4.17	5	3.60	3.79
Mason County Sand Areas	4	3.00	4	3.50	5	4.00	6	4.00	6	3.50	6	4.00	3.67
Hill Prairie Corridor-North	2	4.50	2	4.50	2	3.00	2	3.00	2	3.50	2	3.50	3.67
Cache River-Cypress Creek	5	3.20	6	3.50	5	3.20	6	3.50	6	4.00	6	3.67	3.51
Rock River	5	2.80	5	3.60	7	4.00	6	2.83	8	3.75	7	3.57	3.43
Pere Marquette	3	3.67	3	3.00	3	3.67	4	3.50	4	3.25	3	3.33	3.40
Prairie Ridge Landscape	8	3.25	8	3.38	8	3.00	8	3.00	8	3.50	8	3.88	3.33
Sugar - Pecatonica	5	2.20	5	3.00	5	4.40	5	3.80	5	3.00	5	2.80	3.20
Green River	2	4.00	2	4.00	2	2.50	2	2.50	2	2.00	2	3.00	3.00
Kankakee Sands	8	2.88	8	2.50	8	3.38	8	2.88	8	3.25	8	2.88	2.96
Apple River	3	4.00	3	4.33	2	1.50	2	2.50	2	2.50	3	2.67	2.92
Middle Little Wabash	2	3.00	2	3.00	2	3.50	2	2.00	2	3.00	2	2.50	2.83
Wabash River	3	2.33	3	3.00	2	2.50	2	2.50	2	2.50	3	3.00	2.64
Lost Mound	2	2.50	2	2.50	3	2.33	2	2.50	2	2.50	2	2.50	2.47
Pyramid-Arkland Landscape	1	2.00	1	1.00	1	2.00	1	2.00	1	2.00	1	2.00	1.83

<sup>1</sup> Rated on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being "extremely unlikely" and 5 being "extremely likely."

<sup>2</sup> COAs are rank ordered by average likelihood of all positive events.

source: question 12

a-f question item

## 5. What are conservation priorities in COAs? What are the biggest threats to COAs?

The perceptions of stakeholders regarding priority actions and threats in their COAs were investigated. These views indicate key conservation actions needed in COAs.

### Conservation Priorities

Stakeholders ranked conservation actions with respect to their need in their COA(s) from 1 (lowest priority) to 7 (highest priority) without duplicating rankings across the list of statements. Mean priority rankings were calculated across all COAs (Figure 4) and within individual COAs (Table 7). Data analysis revealed that on average, the restoration and enhancement of wetlands is the highest priority while assisting urban areas in development is the lowest priority across all COAs.

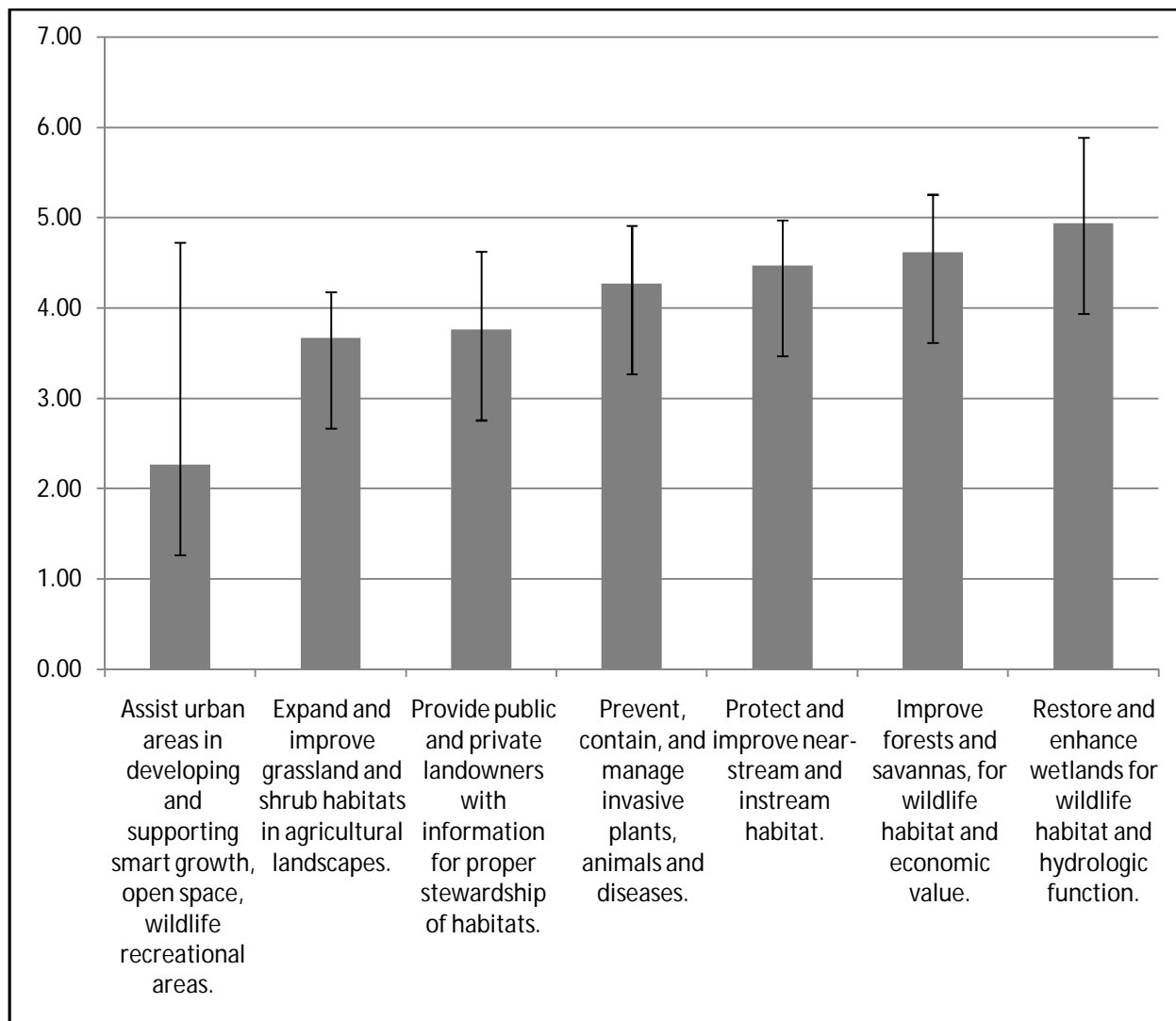


Figure 4. Mean conservation priority rankings across all COAs with standard error  
Source: question 14

Improving forests & savannas is a top priority for 12 COAs and restoration and enhancement of wetlands is a top priority for eight others. Protecting stream habitat is the highest priority in six COAs, while expanding grassland and shrub habitat and managing invasive species is the top priority in three COAs. Outreach to landowners is a top priority in two COAs and assistance to urban areas is the highest priority for one COA (Sinkhole Plain).

Table 7. Mean conservation project priority rankings among individual COAs<sup>1</sup>

Conservation Projects	Protect stream habitat <sup>a</sup>		Improve forests & savannas <sup>b</sup>		Restore & enhance wetlands <sup>c</sup>		Expand grassland & shrub <sup>d</sup>		Manage invasives <sup>e</sup>		Outreach to land owners <sup>f</sup>		Assist urban areas <sup>g</sup>	
	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean
Wisconsin Driftless Forest	3	3.33	3	6.00	3	4.67	3	3.67	3	3.00	3	4.67	3	2.67
Apple River	3	6.00	3	5.33	3	5.00	3	4.00	3	2.67	3	4.00	3	1.00
Lost Mound	3	6.00	3	4.33	3	4.00	3	5.00	3	4.00	3	3.00	3	1.67
Sugar - Pecatonica	6	4.50	6	4.33	6	5.83	6	4.00	6	3.33	6	3.00	6	3.00
Kishwaukee River	6	6.00	6	3.00	6	4.50	6	2.83	6	2.33	6	3.67	6	5.67
Lake-McHenry Wetland Complex	5	3.20	5	5.00	5	6.40	5	3.60	5	4.80	5	2.00	5	3.00
Illinois Beach-Chiwaukee Prairie	3	4.67	3	2.33	3	5.33	3	1.33	3	6.67	3	4.00	3	3.67
Upper Des Plaines River Corridor	3	6.00	3	4.33	3	6.33	3	1.67	3	3.67	3	3.33	3	2.67
Rock River	8	4.88	8	5.00	8	4.88	8	3.25	8	4.00	8	3.75	8	2.25
Nachusa	1	4.00	1	7.00	1	3.00	1	5.00	1	6.00	1	2.00	1	1.00
Green River	3	4.67	3	2.67	3	5.67	3	6.33	3	3.67	3	3.67	3	1.33
Upper Mississippi River	2	4.00	2	5.50	2	4.00	2	2.50	2	3.50	2	5.50	2	3.00
Lower Fox River	7	6.00	7	4.43	7	4.00	7	3.00	7	4.00	7	3.57	7	3.00
Midewin	5	3.60	5	3.60	5	6.00	5	4.00	5	4.20	5	3.60	5	3.00
Kankakee Sands	8	2.88	8	5.13	8	3.88	8	3.75	8	4.38	8	5.13	8	2.88
Middle Illinois River	12	4.42	12	4.17	12	5.92	12	2.17	12	4.25	12	3.83	12	3.25
Mason County Sand Areas	6	4.17	6	4.33	6	5.33	6	4.67	6	4.50	6	3.83	6	1.17
Lower LaMoine River	3	4.33	3	5.33	3	5.00	3	4.33	3	4.00	3	4.00	3	1.00
Siloam Springs	1	2.00	1	7.00	1	3.00	1	6.00	1	5.00	1	4.00	1	1.00
Vermilion River	8	5.50	8	4.00	8	5.50	8	4.75	8	3.75	8	3.38	8	1.13
Pere Marquette	5	4.00	5	5.00	5	4.20	5	4.00	5	4.80	5	3.40	5	2.60
Prairie Ridge Landscape	9	2.56	9	3.89	9	4.89	9	6.11	9	4.89	9	4.44	9	1.22
Lower Kaskaskia Bottomlands	4	4.25	4	5.75	4	4.75	4	1.50	4	4.00	4	5.00	4	2.75
Middle Little Wabash	2	6.00	2	6.00	2	6.00	2	3.50	2	3.50	2	2.00	2	1.00
Hill Prairie Corridor-North Section	2	4.00	2	5.00	2	3.00	2	6.50	2	4.50	2	4.00	2	1.00
Hill Prairie Corridor-South Section	3	2.33	3	5.00	3	2.67	3	4.67	3	6.33	3	4.67	3	2.33
Sinkhole Plain	1	4.00	1	3.00	1	2.00	1	1.00	1	5.00	1	6.00	1	7.00
Pyramid-Arkland Landscape	2	3.00	2	4.50	2	4.50	2	4.00	2	6.00	2	4.50	2	1.50
Wabash River	4	6.25	4	4.75	4	5.75	4	2.50	4	4.50	4	3.25	4	1.00
LaRue-Pine Hills	6	4.83	6	5.67	6	5.00	6	2.50	6	5.33	6	3.33	6	1.33
Eastern Shawnee	5	4.00	5	6.80	5	3.00	5	4.00	5	5.80	5	3.40	5	1.00
Cache River-Cypress Creek	6	5.83	6	4.67	6	6.17	6	3.33	6	3.50	6	3.33	6	1.17

<sup>1</sup>Projects were ranked on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being "lowest priority" and 7 being "highest priority"

Blocked items were ranked the highest for that COA

Source: question 14

<sup>a-g</sup> question item

### Threats to COAs

Stakeholders rated the extent to which potential problems were a threat to the COA on a scale from 1 (no threat) to 5 (extreme threat) (Table 8). Analysis indicated that invasive species are perceived as the highest threat to COAs overall (3.94), followed by degrading habitat quality (3.88) and loss of habitat/changing land use (3.80). On average, illegal harvesting or poaching was rated as the lowest threat (2.02). Stakeholders were also asked to list up to three invasive species of concern in the COA. Garlic mustard (19%), canary grass (16%) and common reed (12%) were the most common species of concern listed (Table 9).

Table 8. Threats facing COAs

Problems	N	Mean	SD	Percent of responses by category				
				no threat	slight threat	moderate threat	major threat	extreme threat
Invasive species	129	3.94	1.14	3.9	10.9	11.6	34.9	38.8
Degrading habitat quality	140	3.88	0.96	2.1	7.9	15.7	48.6	25.7
Loss of habitat-changing land use	141	3.80	1.11	4.3	9.2	19.9	35.5	31.2
Other <sup>a</sup>	26	3.73	1.46	15.4	7.7	3.8	34.6	38.5
Pollutants - sediment	134	3.36	1.11	5.2	17.9	29.1	31.3	16.4
Changes in hydrology or flow	139	3.34	1.26	7.9	19.4	28.1	20.1	24.5
Structures - infrastructure	132	2.79	1.19	13.6	32.6	25.0	18.9	9.8
Climate change	127	2.67	1.17	19.7	25.2	29.1	20.5	5.5
Genetic issues	109	2.51	1.09	18.3	33.9	31.2	11.0	5.5
Illegal harvest or poaching	121	2.02	0.77	24.0	52.9	20.7	1.7	0.8

<sup>a</sup>Other responses written-in included land use change, water flow, pollution, ATV use, lack of resources and fewer prescribed burns.

Source: question 15

Table 9. Invasive species of most concern to stakeholders<sup>1,2</sup>

Invasive species	N	%	Invasive species	N	%
garlic mustard ( <i>Alliaria petiolata</i> )	46	18.5	sumac ( <i>Rhus spp.</i> )	1	0.4
honeysuckle (Caprifoliaceae)	40	16.1	Canada goldenrod ( <i>Solidago canadensis</i> )	1	0.4
canary grass ( <i>Phalaris arundinacea</i> )	29	11.7	curly leaf pondweed ( <i>Potamogeton crispus</i> )	1	0.4
autumn olive ( <i>Elaeagnus umbellata</i> )	20	8.1	softwood trees	1	0.4
common reed ( <i>Phragmites australis</i> )	16	6.5	Ringneck Pheasants ( <i>Phasianus colchicus</i> )	1	0.4
carp (silver, bighead, grass and common) (Cyprinidae)	14	5.6	wintercreeper ( <i>Euonymus fortunei</i> )	1	0.4
tall fescue ( <i>tall fescue</i> )	8	3.2	crown vetch ( <i>Coronilla varia</i> )	1	0.4
black locust ( <i>Robinia pseudoacacia</i> )	7	2.8	Brown Headed Cowbird ( <i>Molothrus ater</i> )	1	0.4
European buckthorn ( <i>Rhamnus cathartica</i> )	7	2.8	spotted knapweed ( <i>Centaurea stoebe</i> )	1	0.4
clover (Fabaceae)	5	2.0	milfoil ( <i>Achillea millefolium</i> )	1	0.4
Japanese stilt grass ( <i>Microstegium vimineum</i> )	5	2.0	purple loosestrife ( <i>Lythrum salicaria</i> )	1	0.4
Johnson grass ( <i>Sorghum halepense</i> )	4	1.6	turkey oak ( <i>Quercus cerris</i> )	1	0.4
narrow-leaved cattails ( <i>Typha angustifolia</i> )	4	1.6	bur cucumber vine ( <i>Sicyos angulatus</i> )	1	0.4
zebra mussels ( <i>Dreissena polymorpha</i> )	4	1.6	moneywort ( <i>Lysimachia nummularia</i> )	1	0.4
tree of heaven ( <i>Ailanthus altissima</i> )	3	1.2	sericea lespedeza ( <i>Lespedeza cuneata</i> )	1	0.4
quaking aspen ( <i>Populus tremuloides</i> )	3	1.2	"Canada" thistle ( <i>Cirsium arvense</i> )	1	0.4
multiflora rose ( <i>Rosa multiflora</i> )	3	1.2	maple trees ( <i>Acer spp.</i> )	1	0.4
kudzu ( <i>Pueraria lobata</i> )	2	0.8	purple loosestrife ( <i>Lythrum salicaria</i> )	1	0.4
watercress ( <i>Nasturtium Officinale</i> )	2	0.8	dogwoods ( <i>Cornus spp.</i> )	1	0.4
"bird's-foot" trefoil ( <i>Lotus corniculatus</i> )	1	0.4	ornamental grasses ( <i>Miscanthus ssp.</i> )	1	0.4
ash borer ( <i>Agrilus planipennis</i> )	1	0.4	coyote ( <i>Canis latrans</i> )	1	0.4
hairy vetch ( <i>Vicia villosa</i> )	1	0.4	raccoon ( <i>Procyon lotor</i> )	1	0.4
Cedar ( <i>Cedrus</i> )	1	0.4	Total	248	

<sup>1</sup>Where the specific species' common name was not provided the assumed invasive name is in quotes (e.g. trefoil was listed by respondents, "bird's-foot" trefoil is the invasive species in Illinois)

<sup>2</sup>Invasive species are rank ordered by the number of stakeholders who identified them as a threat

Source: question 15, open response

Within COA analysis (Table 10) revealed that Lake-McHenry Wetland Complex and Upper Des Plaines River Corridor (3.76) were rated the most threatened COAs overall while the Lower LaMoine River (2.48) and Pyramid-Arkland Landscape (1.61) were rated the least threatened.

Table 10. Threats within COAs<sup>1,2</sup>

Potential threat COA	Climate change <sup>a</sup>		Structures infrastructure <sup>b</sup>		Hydrological changes <sup>c</sup>		Loss of habitat <sup>d</sup>		habitat quality <sup>e</sup>		Pollutants sediment <sup>f</sup>		Genetic issues <sup>g</sup>		Illegal harvest <sup>h</sup>		Invasive species <sup>i</sup>		AVG
	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	Mean
Lake-McHenry Wetland Complex	5	3.60	5	3.60	5	4.60	5	4.60	5	4.00	5	4.20	4	3.00	5	2.00	5	4.80	3.82
Upper Des Plaines River Corridor	3	4.00	3	4.00	3	4.33	3	3.67	3	4.00	3	4.33	2	3.00	2	2.00	2	4.50	3.76
Hill Prairie Corridor-North Section	1	4.00	2	3.00	2	3.00	2	4.50	2	4.50	2	3.50	2	3.50	2	2.00	2	5.00	3.67
Midewin	5	2.80	5	3.60	5	3.60	5	4.20	5	4.40	5	3.80	4	2.75	3	2.67	4	4.75	3.62
Illinois Beach-Chiwaukee Prairie	3	3.67	3	3.33	3	4.67	3	2.67	3	4.00	2	4.00	3	3.33	3	2.00	3	4.67	3.59
Apple River	3	4.00	2	2.50	3	4.00	3	3.67	3	4.33	3	4.33	1	3.00	2	2.50	3	3.67	3.56
Nachusa	1	2.00	0	-	1	3.00	1	5.00	1	5.00	1	3.00	0	-	1	1.00	1	5.00	3.43
Hill Prairie Corridor-South Section	3	3.33	3	2.67	3	2.33	3	4.00	3	4.00	3	3.00	2	4.00	3	2.33	3	5.00	3.41
Wisconsin Driftless Forest	3	4.00	3	2.67	3	3.67	3	4.33	3	4.33	3	3.00	3	2.33	2	1.50	2	4.50	3.37
Lower Fox River	6	2.50	6	4.17	6	4.00	6	4.50	6	3.83	6	3.50	3	2.00	4	2.75	5	2.40	3.29
Middle Illinois River	9	2.44	11	3.00	11	3.91	11	3.82	11	3.82	11	3.91	7	2.14	8	2.13	9	4.22	3.27
Mason County Sand Areas	6	2.67	6	2.33	6	3.50	6	3.67	6	4.33	6	2.67	6	3.67	5	2.20	6	4.33	3.26
Lower Kaskaskia Bottomlands	4	2.75	4	3.50	4	4.00	4	4.25	4	4.00	4	3.25	4	2.75	4	2.00	4	2.75	3.25
Rock River	7	2.86	6	2.17	7	3.29	8	4.25	8	4.00	8	3.50	6	2.50	8	2.25	7	4.14	3.22
Kishwaukee River	6	2.50	5	3.40	6	4.00	6	4.17	6	3.83	5	4.20	4	2.00	5	1.60	5	3.20	3.21
Cache River-Cypress Creek	5	2.40	5	3.80	5	3.80	5	3.40	5	3.60	4	3.75	4	1.75	5	2.20	5	4.00	3.19
Middle Little Wabash	2	2.00	2	2.00	2	3.50	2	4.50	2	4.00	2	3.50	2	2.00	2	2.50	2	4.50	3.17
Vermilion River	6	2.33	5	2.80	7	3.71	8	3.88	8	4.13	7	4.00	6	2.00	7	1.86	7	3.57	3.14
Upper Mississippi River	2	3.00	2	2.00	2	3.00	2	4.50	2	4.50	2	3.00	2	2.50	2	1.50	2	4.00	3.11
Sinkhole Plain	1	3.00	1	4.00	1	4.00	1	4.00	1	2.00	1	4.00	1	3.00	1	2.00	1	2.00	3.11
Wabash River	2	2.00	3	2.33	3	4.00	3	3.67	3	3.67	3	3.33	2	2.00	1	3.00	2	4.00	3.11
Eastern Shawnee	3	2.67	5	2.60	5	2.40	5	3.40	5	3.80	5	2.80	2	3.00	4	2.50	5	4.60	3.09
Sugar - Pecatonica	6	2.33	6	2.17	6	3.50	6	4.00	6	4.00	5	3.60	4	1.50	5	1.80	6	4.00	2.99
Green River	3	2.67	3	2.33	3	3.33	3	4.33	3	4.33	3	2.67	2	2.50	3	1.67	3	3.00	2.98
LaRue-Pine Hills	5	3.20	6	2.33	6	3.33	6	3.00	6	3.50	5	3.80	5	2.00	5	1.80	4	3.75	2.97
Prairie Ridge Landscape	8	2.25	9	1.78	9	1.89	9	3.78	8	4.25	8	2.50	9	3.67	9	2.11	9	3.89	2.90
Siloam Springs	0	-	1	2.00	1	3.00	1	3.00	1	2.00	1	3.00	0	-	1	2.00	1	5.00	2.86
Lost Mound	3	2.33	3	3.33	3	2.67	3	3.67	3	3.33	3	2.00	3	3.00	3	2.00	3	3.33	2.85
Kankakee Sands	7	2.00	8	3.25	8	2.50	8	3.50	8	3.63	8	2.75	8	1.63	7	1.57	8	3.25	2.67
Pere Marquette	5	2.40	4	1.50	5	2.20	5	3.20	5	3.20	5	2.60	5	2.60	5	2.20	5	3.60	2.61
Lower LaMoine River	2	1.00	3	1.67	3	2.67	3	2.67	3	3.67	3	3.67	1	1.00	3	1.33	3	4.67	2.48
Pyramid-Arkland Landscape	2	1.50	2	1.50	2	1.00	2	1.50	2	1.50	2	1.00	2	1.00	1	1.00	2	4.50	1.61
Total		127		133		141		143		141		136		109		122		133	

<sup>1</sup>Rated on a scale from 1 to 5, with one being "no threat" and 5 being "extreme threat."

<sup>2</sup>COAs are rank ordered by average mean response to all items.

Source: question 15

<sup>a-i</sup> question item

## 6. How important are certain conditions to planning and implementation in COAs? How satisfied are stakeholders with these conditions?

Stakeholders were asked to rate first, how important a series of conditions are to COA planning and implementation on a 5-point scale (1- extremely unimportant to 5-extremely important) and second, their level of satisfaction (1- extremely unsatisfied to 5- extremely satisfied) with those conditions in COAs. The difference between the importance and satisfaction mean rankings for each condition was calculated. Conditions with negative rank differences ranked high on the importance scale but low on the satisfaction scale. Conditions with positive rank differences ranked low on the importance scale but high on the satisfaction scale. Stakeholders on average identified funding for COA projects and partners with a shared vision as the most important conditions (Table 11). Partners with a shared vision was the condition with which stakeholders were most satisfied. However, funding for COA projects and strong leadership from natural resource management agencies were conditions that resulted in the highest negative rank difference suggesting that stakeholders deem these conditions important, but are less satisfied with them in the COAs.

Table 11. Importance of and satisfaction with conditions for COA planning and implementation<sup>1,2</sup>

Conditions	Importance				Satisfaction				RD++
	N	Mean	SD	R+	N	Mean	SD	R	
Funding for COA conservation projects	120	4.57	0.99	1	125	2.17	1.11	10	-9
Partners with a shared vision and participating in conservation actions	125	4.53	0.99	2	127	3.47	1.16	1	1
Availability of core habitats and corridors for fish and wildlife populations	124	4.52	0.94	3	130	3.22	1.07	5	-2
Strong leadership from natural resource management agencies	123	4.51	0.92	4	129	2.91	1.31	9	-5
Availability of scientific data on species or important habitats	126	4.48	0.94	5	127	3.33	1.18	3	2
Monitoring the status of fish, wildlife and habitats	125	4.41	0.90	6	126	3.10	1.14	7	-1
Strong leadership from local partner organizations	124	4.26	1.00	7	126	3.25	1.13	4	3
Availability of public lands within the COA	128	4.12	1.11	8	125	3.37	1.15	2	6
Outreach to stakeholders	126	4.11	0.99	9	119	2.97	1.05	8	1
Sharing of physical resources (e.g., equipment, supplies, etc.)	127	3.65	0.97	10	117	3.17	0.92	6	4

<sup>1</sup>Importance rated on a scale 1 to 5, with 1 being “extremely unimportant” and 5 being “extremely important”

<sup>2</sup>Satisfaction rated on a scale 1 to 5, with 1 being “extremely unsatisfied” and 5 being “extremely satisfied”

+ Rank ordered by means

++ Rank difference between importance and satisfaction

Source: question 16

Mean importance ratings for each condition were calculated for the individual COAs (Table 12). Multiple conditions were rated as equally important in most COAs. For example, stakeholders from the Nachusa COA identified both the “availability of core habitats and corridors for fish and wildlife populations” and “outreach to stakeholders” as extremely important (5.00). Mean satisfaction ratings for each condition were also calculated for the individual COAs (Table 13). To determine overall stakeholder satisfaction, means were averaged for each COA. Stakeholders from Hill Prairie Corridor-South Section (4.13) were the most satisfied with the conditions of their COA and stakeholders from the Wabash River (1.80) were the least satisfied with the conditions of their COA.

## 7. Additional Comments from Stakeholders

At the end of the survey, stakeholders were given an opportunity to provide additional comments about the COAs. The responses were grouped and categorized by primary theme. Common statements included comments on the COA boundaries, changing land use, private landowner support, the engagement of partners and the public, and issues with implementation and agency support. Stakeholders also provided several examples of successful COA management (Appendix G).

Table 12. Importance of conditions for planning and implementation within COAs<sup>1</sup>

Conditions	Availability of data <sup>a</sup>		Partners <sup>b</sup>		Agency leadership <sup>c</sup>		Partner leadership <sup>d</sup>		Habitat <sup>e</sup>		Project funding <sup>f</sup>		Resource sharing <sup>g</sup>		Outreach <sup>h</sup>		Monitoring <sup>i</sup>		Availability of public lands <sup>j</sup>	
	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean
Wisconsin Driftless Forest	2	4.50	2	5.00	2	4.50	2	3.00	2	5.00	2	5.00	2	4.00	2	5.00	2	4.00	2	4.50
Apple River	3	4.33	3	5.00	3	4.67	3	4.33	3	4.67	3	4.67	3	3.67	3	4.33	3	4.33	3	4.33
Lost Mound	3	4.00	2	3.00	2	4.00	2	3.00	2	3.50	3	4.00	3	3.33	3	4.67	3	3.67	3	3.67
Sugar - Pecatonica	5	4.80	6	4.67	6	4.33	5	4.60	6	4.50	6	4.17	4	3.00	6	3.33	6	4.17	6	4.17
Kishwaukee River	6	4.67	6	4.83	6	4.50	6	4.67	6	5.00	6	5.00	6	3.50	6	4.33	6	4.50	6	4.17
Lake-McHenry Wetland Complex	4	4.75	4	4.50	4	4.50	4	4.50	4	4.25	3	4.00	5	3.60	4	4.00	4	4.50	4	4.00
Illinois Beach-Chiwaukee Prairie	2	3.00	2	3.50	2	3.00	3	3.33	2	3.00	2	3.00	3	3.33	2	3.00	2	3.50	2	4.00
Upper Des Plaines River Corridor	2	2.50	2	3.00	2	3.00	2	3.00	2	3.00	2	3.00	3	3.00	3	3.67	2	4.00	2	3.50
Rock River	6	3.33	5	4.20	5	4.20	4	3.75	5	4.60	5	4.20	5	4.20	5	3.80	5	4.80	7	4.29
Nachusa	1	5.00	1	5.00	1	5.00	1	4.00	1	5.00	1	5.00	1	3.00	1	4.00	1	5.00	1	3.00
Green River	3	5.00	3	4.00	3	4.00	3	4.33	3	4.33	3	4.67	3	3.33	3	3.33	3	4.33	3	3.67
Upper Mississippi River	1	5.00	1	5.00	1	5.00	1	5.00	1	5.00	1	5.00	1	3.00	1	5.00	1	4.00	1	4.00
Lower Fox River	5	4.60	6	5.00	5	4.80	5	5.00	6	4.67	5	5.00	6	3.33	5	4.60	5	4.00	5	4.20
Midewin	4	4.75	4	4.75	4	5.00	4	4.00	4	4.75	4	4.50	4	4.00	4	3.75	4	4.75	4	5.00
Kankakee Sands	7	4.43	6	4.67	6	4.83	6	4.33	6	4.67	6	5.00	6	4.17	7	4.29	7	4.43	7	4.00
Middle Illinois River	9	4.44	9	4.33	9	4.67	9	4.11	9	4.11	8	4.75	9	3.67	9	4.22	8	4.00	10	3.90
Mason County Sand Areas	5	5.00	5	4.00	5	4.00	5	4.00	4	5.00	4	5.00	5	2.80	5	4.00	5	4.80	5	4.20
Lower LaMoine River	3	4.00	3	5.00	3	4.67	3	5.00	3	4.33	3	3.33	3	3.67	3	4.33	3	3.67	3	2.00
Siloam Springs	1	5.00	1	5.00	1	4.00	1	5.00	1	5.00	1	4.00	1	4.00	1	5.00	1	5.00	1	4.00
Vermilion River	7	4.86	8	4.88	8	4.88	8	4.63	8	4.88	8	5.00	8	4.00	7	4.86	8	4.88	8	4.50
Pere Marquette	5	4.80	5	4.40	5	4.80	5	4.00	5	4.60	5	4.80	5	3.60	5	3.40	5	4.60	5	4.60
Prairie Ridge Landscape	9	4.78	9	4.89	9	4.89	9	4.00	9	4.67	9	4.78	9	3.78	9	4.11	9	4.44	8	4.63
Lower Kaskaskia Bottomlands	4	4.75	4	5.00	4	4.50	4	4.75	4	5.00	4	5.00	4	3.75	4	4.75	4	4.50	4	3.00
Middle Little Wabash	2	5.00	2	5.00	2	5.00	2	4.00	2	4.50	2	4.50	2	3.00	2	3.50	2	4.50	2	3.50
Hill Prairie Corridor-North Section	2	5.00	2	5.00	2	5.00	2	5.00	2	5.00	2	5.00	2	4.00	2	4.50	2	5.00	2	4.00
Hill Prairie Corridor-South Section	3	5.00	3	5.00	3	4.33	3	4.67	3	5.00	3	4.67	3	4.33	3	4.67	2	4.50	3	4.33
Sinkhole Plain	1	5.00	1	5.00	1	5.00	1	5.00	1	4.00	1	5.00	1	3.00	1	5.00	1	5.00	1	3.00
Pyramid-Arkland Landscape	2	3.50	1	1.00	1	3.00	2	4.00	1	3.00	1	5.00	1	3.00	2	2.50	2	5.00	2	5.00
Wabash River	4	3.25	4	3.50	4	3.75	4	3.75	4	3.75	4	4.00	4	2.75	4	3.00	4	3.75	4	3.50
LaRue-Pine Hills	6	4.33	5	4.40	6	4.67	5	4.80	6	4.67	4	4.75	5	4.20	5	4.60	6	4.17	5	4.40
Eastern Shawnee	5	5.00	5	5.00	4	5.00	5	4.20	4	4.50	5	4.40	5	4.20	4	4.50	5	4.80	4	5.00
Cache River-Cypress Creek	4	4.25	5	4.20	4	4.00	5	4.00	5	4.20	4	4.00	5	3.80	5	4.00	4	4.75	5	4.20

<sup>1</sup>Importance rated on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being "extremely unimportant" and 5 being "extremely important."

Source: question 16- IMPORTANCE

<sup>a-j</sup> question item

Table 13. Satisfaction with conditions for COA planning and implementation within COAs<sup>1,2</sup>

Conditions COA	Availability of data <sup>a</sup>		Partners <sup>b</sup>		Agency leadership <sup>c</sup>		Partner leadership <sup>d</sup>		Habitats <sup>e</sup>		Project funding <sup>f</sup>		Resource sharing <sup>g</sup>		Out-reach <sup>h</sup>		Monitoring <sup>i</sup>		Availability of public lands <sup>j</sup>		AVG
	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	Mean
Hill Prairie Corridor-South Section	3	4.00	3	4.67	3	3.67	3	5.00	3	4.67	3	3.33	3	4.33	3	4.67	2	3.00	3	4.00	4.13
Sinkhole Plain	1	4.00	1	4.00	1	3.00	1	4.00	1	4.00	1	4.00	1	3.00	1	4.00	1	4.00	1	3.00	3.70
Eastern Shawnee	5	4.00	5	3.60	5	3.20	5	3.60	5	4.20	5	2.80	5	3.20	4	3.00	5	3.80	4	4.75	3.62
Midewin	3	4.00	4	4.00	4	3.25	4	3.25	4	3.25	4	3.00	4	3.75	3	3.67	4	3.75	4	3.50	3.54
Rock River	6	3.67	7	3.71	7	3.29	6	4.00	7	3.71	5	2.80	4	3.00	6	3.83	6	3.33	7	3.86	3.52
Lower Kaskaskia Bottomlands	4	3.75	4	4.00	4	3.50	4	3.50	4	4.00	4	2.25	4	2.75	4	3.50	4	3.50	4	3.00	3.38
Upper Des Plaines River Corridor	3	4.33	3	3.00	3	2.67	3	3.67	2	3.50	3	1.67	2	3.00	3	3.33	2	3.50	2	4.50	3.32
Lake-McHenry Wetland Complex	5	4.00	5	3.80	5	4.20	5	3.80	5	2.60	4	1.75	5	3.20	5	3.20	5	3.00	4	3.25	3.28
Pyramid-Arkland Landscape	2	3.00	1	1.00	0	-	1	3.00	1	3.00	1	5.00	1	3.00	1	4.00	2	4.50	2	3.00	3.28
LaRue-Pine Hills	6	3.33	6	3.67	6	3.33	5	3.00	6	4.17	6	1.83	6	3.17	6	2.83	6	3.33	6	4.00	3.27
Vermilion River	8	4.00	8	3.88	8	3.50	8	3.38	8	2.63	8	1.63	7	3.14	5	3.00	8	3.38	8	4.00	3.25
Wisconsin Driftless Forest	2	3.00	2	4.50	2	2.00	2	4.50	2	4.00	2	1.00	2	4.00	2	3.00	2	2.50	2	4.00	3.25
Illinois Beach-Chiwaukee Prairie	3	3.33	3	3.33	3	3.33	3	2.67	3	4.00	2	3.00	3	3.33	3	2.33	3	3.67	2	3.50	3.25
Prairie Ridge Landscape	7	4.57	9	3.67	9	3.11	9	3.11	9	2.78	8	2.25	8	3.38	9	2.67	8	3.63	8	2.75	3.19
Cache River-Cypress Creek	6	3.00	6	3.33	6	3.17	6	2.50	6	3.17	6	2.83	6	3.00	6	3.33	6	3.33	6	3.83	3.15
Middle Illinois River	9	3.56	8	3.75	9	3.11	9	3.67	9	3.11	8	2.13	8	2.88	9	3.00	9	3.33	9	2.89	3.14
Sugar - Pecatonica	4	3.50	6	4.50	6	3.00	5	3.60	6	3.00	6	1.83	4	2.25	6	3.50	6	2.50	6	3.67	3.14
Kankakee Sands	7	3.00	6	3.50	7	3.00	6	3.17	7	3.57	6	1.83	5	3.40	5	3.20	7	3.29	6	3.17	3.11
Upper Mississippi River	1	2.00	1	4.00	1	1.00	1	5.00	1	5.00	1	1.00	1	3.00	1	4.00	1	2.00	1	4.00	3.10
Lower LaMoine River	3	2.67	3	3.67	3	2.67	3	3.33	3	3.00	3	1.67	3	3.33	3	2.67	3	3.00	3	4.00	3.00
Middle Little Wabash	2	3.50	2	3.00	2	2.50	2	3.00	2	2.50	2	3.00	2	4.00	2	2.50	2	3.00	2	3.00	3.00
Pere Marquette	5	2.80	5	2.80	5	2.20	5	3.00	5	3.60	5	2.40	5	3.20	4	2.75	4	2.75	5	3.80	2.93
Hill Prairie Corridor-North	2	2.50	2	2.00	2	3.00	2	3.50	2	2.50	2	3.50	2	4.00	2	2.00	2	2.00	2	3.50	2.85
Apple River	3	2.33	2	4.50	2	1.50	2	4.00	2	3.00	3	2.00	2	2.50	2	2.50	3	2.33	2	3.50	2.82
Siloam Springs	1	2.00	1	2.00	1	2.00	1	2.00	1	4.00	1	4.00	1	4.00	1	2.00	1	2.00	1	4.00	2.80
Lower Fox River	6	2.67	5	3.20	5	2.20	5	2.80	6	3.33	6	1.33	4	3.25	5	2.60	5	3.40	6	3.00	2.78
Kishwaukee River	6	2.83	6	3.50	6	2.33	6	3.83	6	2.67	6	1.33	6	3.33	6	2.50	6	1.67	6	2.50	2.65
Mason County Sand Areas	5	2.60	5	2.60	5	2.80	5	2.60	5	2.60	5	2.40	5	3.00	5	2.40	5	2.60	5	2.80	2.64
Lost Mound	3	2.67	3	2.33	3	2.33	3	1.33	3	3.00	3	1.67	3	2.33	3	2.33	3	3.67	3	2.67	2.43
Green River	2	2.50	2	2.00	2	2.00	2	1.50	2	2.00	2	2.50	2	2.50	1	1.00	1	1.00	1	4.00	2.10
Nachusa	1	4.00	1	1.00	1	1.00	1	2.00	1	1.00	1	1.00	1	3.00	1	3.00	1	2.00	1	2.00	2.00
Wabash River	3	2.00	2	1.50	3	1.33	3	1.67	3	2.00	3	1.67	2	3.00	2	1.50	3	2.33	3	1.00	1.80

<sup>1</sup> Satisfaction rated on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being "extremely unsatisfied" and 5 being "extremely satisfied."

<sup>2</sup> COAs are rank ordered by average mean response to all items.

Source: question 16- SATISFACTION

<sup>a-j</sup> question item

## DISCUSSION

The survey results reveal important information about COA planning, conservation priorities, threats, and key factors contributing to the success of COAs in Illinois. The internet survey was distributed to a range of stakeholders that included state and federal level natural resource management agency personnel, NGO representatives, university researchers, and others. Respondents were asked to identify up to three COAs for which they could provide insight about the status of natural resource planning. Each of the 32 COAs was represented in the survey. The data collected here will be used by IDNR, TNC and SIUC partners to guide communication and coordination support they provide to COAs. Stakeholders can use these findings as valuable lessons learned in COA planning across the state. Stakeholders working to address problem areas can look to other COAs with strengths in those areas for advice and assistance. The findings may also inform the development of COA conservation goals and objectives. Finally, the data may serve as a tool for strengthening partnerships and building capacity for conservation efforts associated with planning and on the ground implementation.

The study findings must be considered in light of a few research limitations. First, the perspectives represented in this survey are predominantly those of natural resource managers and NGO staff. The community member perspective, or that of the local landowner, business person, community leader, or concerned citizen, is not represented here. Therefore, the findings should be considered as one of multiple perspectives that exist regarding Illinois COAs and habitat conservation efforts throughout the state. Future research should seek to document these important local voices and continue to bolster community-based COA planning efforts. Second, while the overall sample size of 209 completed surveys provides what we believe to be a reliable overview of COA planning statewide, individual level COA findings are constrained by small sample sizes. For instance, Siloam Springs and Sinkhole Plain each only had one survey completed. Thus, data presented for these COAs come from one stakeholder's perspective which in turn may limit the validity and reliability of interpretations.

### Planning in COAs

Overall, a variety of planning efforts in different stages was documented across the COAs. While stakeholders' general evaluation of the resource management plans was that they are somewhat effective, over a quarter acknowledged being uncertain about how effective the plans will be in managing and protecting habitats or fish and wildlife. This uncertainty can likely be attributed to the fact that many COAs are still in the early phases of planning or have just begun monitoring efforts.

This study provides a barometer of the status of COA planning and some clear insight into indicators of success of a resource management plan. According to stakeholders, funding is critical. Not having the appropriate level of funding or the type of equipment needed for conservation planning and implementation appears to be a major constraint to success. Interestingly, the single most important contributor to success, according to stakeholders, is having community or landowner support. COAs will benefit from technical support that provides information about various funding sources, resource pooling opportunities, and creative interagency or cross-sector partnerships. COAs also will benefit from guidance in strengthening relationships with community members and landowners.

In terms of what stakeholders expect for the future of COA planning efforts, a high degree of optimism was documented. The majority of stakeholders anticipate positive media attention around conservation initiatives as well as local interest and commitment to conservation initiatives from landowners and others. This latter expectation is encouraging, especially given that community support was deemed a significant contributor to COA success. Other outcomes such as tangible progress toward plan implementation, active outreach, and measurable resource benefits appear at least somewhat likely. The expected timeframe, however, for benefits to fish, wildlife and important habitats seems to vary considerably with the majority of stakeholders anticipating benefits will take 1 to 10 years. The issue of timelines is an important one to consider, since restoration and recovery rates vary widely across ecosystems and some benefits are not necessarily discernable by the general public. Ongoing communication between COA partners and local stakeholders about project outcomes and timelines is important so that expectations are informed by the realities and oftentimes, uncertainties of ecosystem management.

### **COA priorities and threats**

Restoring and enhancing wetlands and improving forests and savannas emerged as the highest priority conservation actions across the COAs, though individual COA priorities varied. In contrast, the presence of invasive species was perceived as the biggest threat to COAs. Garlic mustard, honeysuckle, and canary grass were identified as the species of most concern to stakeholders. COA partners will benefit from continued coordination and information sharing around these three issues that are so central to conservation planning across the state.

### **Important conditions for COA planning and implementation**

The study identified several gaps with respect to the importance of certain conditions for COA planning and implementation and stakeholders' satisfaction with those conditions. First and foremost, funding for COA projects was acknowledged as a primary need across COAs. As mentioned earlier, COA partners should step up efforts to assist individual COAs with identifying funding sources and securing and managing funding. Stakeholders are also looking to natural resource management agencies to provide stronger leadership in conservation planning and implementation. While agency leadership was identified as extremely important, stakeholders were neutral in their satisfaction with the current leadership provided. It is important to point out that importance and satisfaction are not necessarily independent of one another. Often a condition that is currently unsatisfactory becomes extremely important. It should also be noted that as respondents, especially agency staff, rated the importance of the "availability of core habitats and corridors for fish and wildlife populations," their ratings were likely influenced by the lack of staff to manage extra lands, which may have caused respondents to list this condition as less important for COA planning.

### **The status of individual COAs**

Individual level COA analysis shows the diversity and richness of conservation planning efforts across the state. It is clear that each COA has a unique set of resources and challenges it faces in protecting and managing habitats and fish and wildlife species. At the same time, COAs can benefit from learning more about other COAs including how particular positive outcomes have been achieved or what specific pitfalls should be avoided. COAs can also model themselves after other COAs that have demonstrated strengths in certain areas or identify strategically with COAs facing similar threats. Certain COAs emerged as being particularly successful in conservation efforts. For example, Hill Prairie Corridor-South Section emerged as a leader in many conditions associated with effective planning and implementation. This COA appears to be particularly strong in fostering leadership and developing a shared vision among its partners. In resource management plan effectiveness, Hill Prairie Corridor-North Section and Cache River-Cypress Creek COAs were standouts. In contrast, the Wabash River was revealed as a COA in need of support. This COA ranked at the bottom for issues such as availability of public lands and availability of scientific data on species or important habitats. A summary of findings and overview of each COA is provided (Table 14) to highlight the diverse needs and strengths of these areas across the state, especially in reference to the first three criteria developed by the IL-WAP for COA designation:

1. wildlife and habitat resources of statewide importance
2. partners willing to be involved
3. financial and human resources

The fourth criterion developed by the IDNR is that a COA must have an agreed-upon conservation purpose and set of objectives. This criterion is deemed extremely important in successful COA management by the stakeholders in this survey as well as the IDNR as it increases opportunities for COAs to receive funding. Stakeholders identified "partners with a shared vision" as the condition with which they were most satisfied, which is a positive sign. However, this criterion requires additional exploration beyond the results of this survey, representing an area for future research. Currently, representatives of the IDNR are pursuing partnership statements of all stakeholders involved in individual COAs to ensure this criterion is met.

Table 14. Summary data on individual COAs<sup>1</sup>

COA	N	RMP <sup>a</sup>	Conservation Priority <sup>b</sup>	Major Threat(s) <sup>c</sup>	Criterion 1 <sup>d</sup>	Criterion 2 <sup>e</sup>	Criterion 3 <sup>f</sup>
Hill Prairie Corridor-South (25.5)	4	↑	invasives	invasives	↑↑	↑↑	↑
Wisconsin Driftless Forest (1)	4	↑	forests & savannas	invasives	↑	↑↑	↔
Sinkhole Plain (26)	1	↑	outreach	structure/ infrastructure, loss of habitat, pollutants/ sediment	↑	↑	↑
Kankakee Sands (15)	15	↑	forests & savannas, outreach	habitat quality	↑	↑	↔
Sugar - Pecatonica (4)	9	↑	wetlands	loss of habitat, invasives	↔	↑↑	↔
Rock River (9)	9	↑	forests & savannas	loss of habitat	↑	↑	↔
LaRue-Pine Hills (29)	7	↑	forests & savannas	pollutants/ sediment	↑	↑	↔
Eastern Shawnee (30)	7	↑	forests & savannas	invasives	↑	↑	↔
Apple River (2)	5	↑	wetlands	habitat quality, pollutants/ sediment	↔	↑↑	↔
Lower Kaskaskia Bottomlands (23)	4	↑	forests & savannas	loss of habitat	↑	↑	↔
Upper Mississippi River (12)	2	↑	forests & savannas, outreach	loss of habitat, habitat quality	↑↑	↑	↓
Middle Illinois River (16)	24	↑	wetlands	invasives	↔	↑	↔
Vermilion River (20)	19	↑	wetlands, streams	habitat quality	↔	↑	↔
Prairie Ridge Landscape (22)	10	↑	grassland & shrub	habitat quality	↔	↑	↔
Lake-McHenry Wetland Complex (6)	8	↑	wetlands	invasives	↔	↑	↔
Midewin (14)	7	↑	wetlands	invasives	↔	↑	↔
Pere Marquette (21)	7	↑	forests & savannas	invasives	↑	↔	↔
Kishwaukee River (5)	6	↑	streams	pollutants/ sediment	↔	↑	↔
Lower LaMoine River (18)	3	↑	forests & savannas	invasives	↔	↑	↔
Cache River-Cypress Creek (31)	9	↑	wetlands	invasives	↔	↔	↔
Mason County Sand Areas (17)	8	↑	wetlands	habitat quality, invasives	↔	↔	↔
Illinois Beach-Chiwaukee Prairie (7)	5	↔	invasives	invasives, hydrology	↑	↔	↔
Upper Des Plaines River Corridor (8)	3	↔	wetlands	invasives	↑	↔	↔
Hill Prairie Corridor-North (25)	3	↑↑	grassland & shrub	invasives	↔	↓	↔
Siloam Springs (19)	1	↑	forests & savannas	invasives	↑	↓	↔
Middle Little Wabash (24)	2	↔	forests & savannas, wetlands	loss of habitat, invasives	↔	↔	↔
Lower Fox River (13)	13	↔	streams	loss of habitat	↔	↔	↓
Pyramid-Arkland Landscape (27)	2	↓	invasives	invasives	↔	↓↓	↑
Lost Mound (3)	3	↔	streams	loss of habitat	↔	↓	↓
Green River (11)	4	↓	grasslands & shrub	loss of habitat, habitat quality	↓	↓	↓
Wabash River (28)	4	-	streams	hydrology, invasives	↓	↓	↓
Nachusa (10)	2	↑	forests & savannas	loss of habitat, habitat quality, invasives	↓↓	↓↓	↓↓

<sup>1</sup> Arrows indicate mean score (rounded to the nearest whole number) from stakeholders on a scale of very low (↓↓), low (↓), moderate (↔), high (↑) and very high (↑↑)

<sup>a</sup> Average of the mean scores from questions 8 and 9, the effectiveness of the resource management plan in managing/protecting fish/wildlife and important habitats

<sup>b</sup> Conservation actions receiving highest "priority score" in question 14

<sup>c</sup> Potential problems receiving highest "threat score" in question 15

<sup>d</sup> Mean score from question 16 satisfaction, item e, availability of core habitats and corridors for fish and wildlife

<sup>e</sup> Mean score from question 16 satisfaction, item b, partners with a shared vision and participating in conservation actions

<sup>f</sup> Average of the mean scores from question 16 satisfaction, items c, d and f, leadership from natural resource agencies, leadership from partner organizations and funding available for conservation projects

**Conclusion**

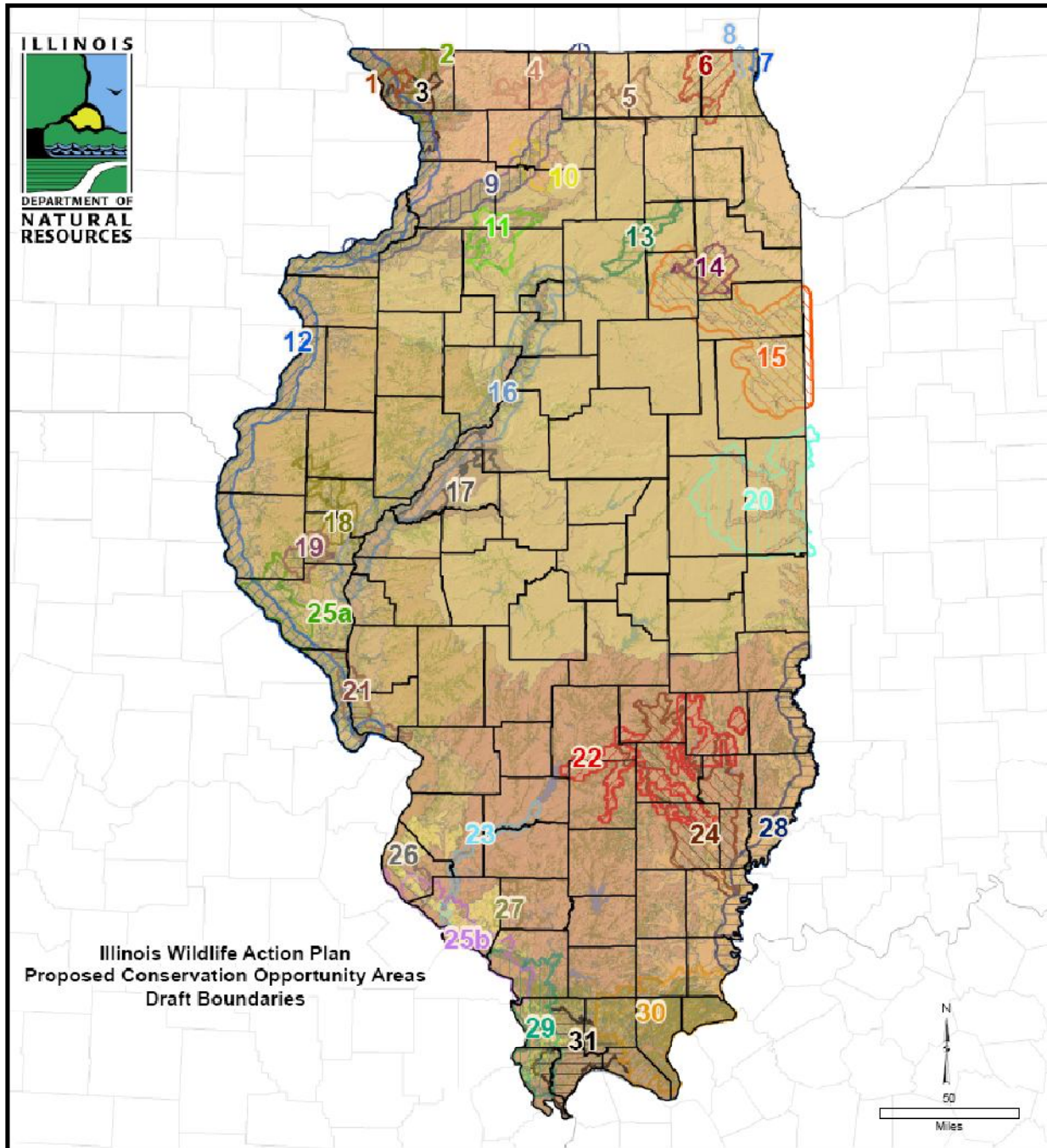
The results of this survey provide additional information regarding the diversity among Illinois' COAs. The data show specific areas where assistance is needed and highlight COAs that require targeted support. As the IDNR, TNC and SIUC work in partnership with COAs, monitoring and evaluation will remain important. The views of all stakeholders including those of local community members and landowners should be assessed as progress is made in COA planning and implementation.

**LITERATURE CITED**

Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR). (2005, July). The Illinois Comprehensive Wildlife Plan and Strategy (IL-WAP). Retrieved from [http://dnr.state.il.us/orc/wildliferesources/theplan/final/Illinois\\_final\\_report.pdf](http://dnr.state.il.us/orc/wildliferesources/theplan/final/Illinois_final_report.pdf).

**APPENDICES**

Appendix A. Map of Illinois COAs



Illinois Wildlife Action Plan  
Proposed Conservation Opportunity Areas  
Draft Boundaries

- |  |                              |   |                                  |
|--|------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| <b>Conservation Opportunity Areas</b>  | (8) Rock River               | (18) Lower LaMoine River                    | (28) Sinkhole Plain              |
| (1) Wisconsin Driftless Forest         | (10) Nachusa                 | (18) Siloam Springs                         | (27) Pyramid - Arkland Landscape |
| (2) Apple River                        | (11) Green River             | (20) Vermilion River                        | (28) Wabash River                |
| (3) Lost Mound                         | (12) Upper Mississippi River | (21) Pere Marquette                         | (29) LaRue - Pine Hills          |
| (4) Sugar - Pecatonica River           | (13) Lower Fox River         | (22) Prairie Ridge Landscape                | (30) Eastern Shawnee             |
| (5) Kishwaukee River                   | (14) Midwin                  | (23) Lower Kaskaskia Bottomlands            | (31) Cache River - Cypress Creek |
| (6) Lake - McHenry Wetland Complex     | (15) Kanakakee Sands         | (24) Middle Little Wabash                   |                                  |
| (7) Illinois Beach - Chikoukee Prairie | (16) Middle Illinois River   | (25a) Hill Prairie Corridor - North Section |                                  |
| (8) Upper Des Plaines River Corridor   | (17) Mason County Sand Areas | (25b) Hill Prairie Corridor - South Section |                                  |

**Appendix A. COA Survey**

# Conservation Opportunity Areas (COA) project

## 1. SURVEY INSTRUCTIONS

1 - Please refer to the Conservation Opportunity Areas (COA) map provided before completing the survey. 2 -

You may complete a separate survey for up to three (3) COAs.

3 - An asterisk (\*) indicates that a response is required for the question or any part of the question. 3 -

To complete the survey you must click on the SUBMIT button after the last question.

# Conservation Opportunity Areas (COA) project

## 2. RESPONDENT INFORMATION

**1. From the list below, please select the choice that most closely describes your affiliation.**

University/Research Institution

Non-governmental Organization

Federal Agency

Private Stakeholder (Landowner)

State Agency

Private Stakeholder (Non-landowner)

Other (please specify)

**2. OPTIONAL: If you wish to receive more information about Conservation Opportunity Areas (COAs), please provide your name and e-mail address below.**

Name:

Email:

# Conservation Opportunity Areas (COA) project

## 3. CONSERVATION OPPORTUNITY AREAS

From the list below, please select one (1) Conservation Opportunity Area (COA) for which you are able to provide insight about the area's current status and potential for conservation opportunities.

You may complete a separate survey for up to three (3) COA's.

### \* 3. Select one COA (see map)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wisconsin Driftless Forest (1)       | <input type="checkbox"/> Mason County Sand Areas (17)             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Apple River (2)                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Lower LaMoine River (18)                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lost Mound (3)                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Siloam Springs (19)                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sugar - Pecatonica (4)               | <input type="checkbox"/> Vermilion River (20)                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kishwaukee River (5)                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Pere Marquette (21)                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lake-McHenry Wetland Complex (6)     | <input type="checkbox"/> Prairie Ridge Landscape (22)             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Illinois Beach-Chiwaukee Prairie (7) | <input type="checkbox"/> Lower Kaskaskia Bottomlands (23)         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Upper Des Plaines River Corridor (8) | <input type="checkbox"/> Middle Little Wabash (24)                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rock River (9)                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Hill Prairie Corridor-North Section (25) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nachusa (10)                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Hill Prairie Corridor-South Section (26) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Green River (11)                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Sinkhole Plain (26)                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Upper Mississippi River (12)         | <input type="checkbox"/> Pyramid-Arkland Landscape (27)           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lower Fox River (13)                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Wabash River (28)                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Midewin (14)                         | <input type="checkbox"/> LaRue-Pine Hills (29)                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kankakee Sands (15)                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Eastern Shawnee (30)                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Middle Illinois River (16)           | <input type="checkbox"/> Cache River-Cypress Creek (31)           |

# Conservation Opportunity Areas (COA) project

## 4. CURRENT & FUTURE PLANNING

First, we would like to understand your perception of the likelihood of certain conditions, actions or circumstances in this COA.

\* **4. Do you know of any Resource Management Plans that may be available for any part of this COA or nearby areas?**

Yes

No

**5. If you answered "yes" to the previous question, please provide the source, title, author, date, internet address, or other information that would allow us to locate the resource management plan.**

## Conservation Opportunity Areas (COA) project

### 5. CURRENT & FUTURE PLANNING (CONTINUED)

\* 6. Are you aware of any data collection/monitoring efforts to assess the Resource Management Plan for this COA?

Yes

No

7. If "yes" to the previous question, please provide information about the monitoring (e.g., agency or organization conducting the data collection).

# Conservation Opportunity Areas (COA) project

## 6. MANAGEMENT PLANS

The following questions ask about your perspective on the availability and effectiveness of existing Resource Management Plans in this COA.

### 8. How effective is/are the Resource Management Plan(s) for managing and protecting fish and wildlife.

- Extremely ineffective
- Somewhat ineffective
- Neither ineffective or effective
- Somewhat effective
- Extremely effective
- Unsure

### 9. How effective is/are the Resource Management Plan(s) for managing and protecting important habitats?

- Extremely ineffective
- Somewhat ineffective
- Neither ineffective or effective
- Somewhat effective
- Extremely effective
- Unsure

### 10. Please list the most important factors that have contributed to the success of the Resource Management Plan (List up to 3).

### 11. Please list the most important factors that have reduced the success of the Resource Management Plan (List up to 3).

### \* 12. How likely are the following to occur in this COA?

	extremely unlikely	somewhat unlikely	neither unlikely or likely	somewhat likely	extremely likely	unsure/NA
A Resource Management Plan for this COA or adjacent areas will be completed within the next two years.	=	=	=	=	=	=
Tangible progress towards implementing the Resource Management Plan within three years of plan completion.	=	=	=	=	=	=
Local interest and commitment to conservation initiatives; support from local landowners.	=	=	=	=	=	=
Active local outreach programs.	=	=	=	=	=	=
Positive media attention around conservation initiatives over the next three years.	=	=	=	=	=	=
Documented, measurable benefits for habitat or fish and wildlife populations over the next three years.	=	=	=	=	=	=

# Conservation Opportunity Areas (COA) project

## 7. TIMEFRAMES & PRIORITIES

The following questions are to understand your perspective on the estimated amount of time to achieve results and priority actions within this COA.

\* **13. Upon completion of a Resource Management Plan for this COA, how long do you believe it will take to see benefits for fish & wildlife and important habitats?**

- Less than 6 months
- 6 to 12 months
- 1-3 years
- 4 to 10 years
- more than 10 years
- Unsure

\* **14. For this COA, please rank the following statements with respect to their need in this COA. Note: Only one response per statement and no duplicate rankings.**

	1 - Lowest Priority	2	3	4	5	6	7 - Highest Priority
Protect and improve near-stream and instream habitat.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improve forests and savannas, for wildlife habitat and economic value.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Restore and enhance wetlands for wildlife habitat and hydrologic function.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Expand and improve grassland and shrub habitats in agricultural landscapes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prevent, contain, and manage invasive plants, animals and diseases.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide public and private landowners with information for proper stewardship of habitats.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assist urban areas in developing and supporting smart growth, open space, wildlife recreational areas.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

# Conservation Opportunity Areas (COA) project

## 8. THREATS TO RESOURCES

The following question is designed to understand your view of future threats to the resources.

### 15. To what extent are the following conditions a threat to the future of fish and wildlife in this COA?

	No Threat	Slight Threat	Moderate Threat	Major Threat	Extreme Threat	Unsure
Climate change	=	=	=	=	=	=
Structures - infrastructure	=	=	=	=	=	=
Changes in hydrology or flow	=	=	=	=	=	=
Loss of habitat-changing landuse	=	=	=	=	=	=
Degrading habitat quality	=	=	=	=	=	=
Pollutants - sediment	=	=	=	=	=	=
Genetic issues	=	=	=	=	=	=
Illegal harvest or poaching	=	=	=	=	=	=
Invasive species (please specify the 3 highest priorities species)	=	=	=	=	=	=
Other (please list)	=	=	=	=	=	=

List 3 invasive species or other (please specify)

## 9. PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

Availability of scientific data on species or important habitats	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Strong leadership from natural resource management agencies	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Availability of core habitats and corridors for fish and wildlife populations	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Sharing of physical resources (e.g., equipment, supplies, etc.)	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Monitoring the status of fish, wildlife and habitats	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

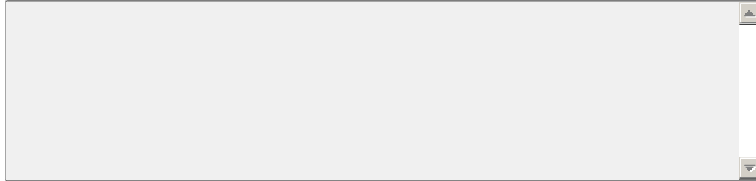
# Conservation Opportunity Areas (COA) project

## 10. COMMENTS

Please include any additional comments that you feel will be of assistance with planning and implementation in this COA.

NOTE: If you wish to complete a survey for another COA (up to three) please return to the email solicitation we sent you and begin again. Thank you!

### 17. Any additional comments.



## Appendix C. Invitation to participate in the survey

**From:** Myers, David [mailto:David.Myers@Illinois.gov]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 06, 2009 7:51 PM  
**To:** [recipient e-mail address]  
**Subject:** Request for information Re: Conservation Opportunity Areas

From: David J. Myers

Hello! Thank you for taking the time to read through the following:

I am the Conservation Opportunity Area project manager for the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. I have been working with Dr. Mae Davenport, Assistant Professor in the Department of Forestry at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale to conduct a survey that will enhance understanding of planning and implementation needs associated with Conservation Opportunity Areas (COAs) that were identified in the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan.

<http://dnr.state.il.us/orc/wildliferesources/theplan/outlines.pdf> A map of the COAs is attached.

You have been selected to participate in this survey because you are a representative of an agency or non-governmental organization who may have insight about one or more Conservation Opportunity Areas. The data collected will be used to help guide natural resources efforts such as planning and on-the-ground implementation of habitat improvement practices in these areas.

This survey will take an estimated 15 to 20 minutes to complete. All your responses will be kept confidential within reasonable limits. Only people directly involved with this project will have access to the surveys. A blind copy format will be used so that the list of recipients will not appear in the header. If you have significant knowledge about more than one COA that you would like to share, please feel free to complete the survey up to three times. Just follow the link from this email for each subsequent survey.

[http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=8xdpmMbCSJ8v\\_2bKKPatTswA\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=8xdpmMbCSJ8v_2bKKPatTswA_3d_3d)

Completion and return of this survey indicates voluntary consent to participate in this study.

*If you wish to have your name removed from any future mailings associated with this survey, please reply to this e-mail with the message: "remove my name from the mailing list."*

*If you do not return the opt-out message, two (2) reminder messages will be sent during the next five (5) weeks.*

Questions about this study can be directed to

David J. Myers  
Conservation Opportunity Area Project Manager  
Illinois Department of Natural Resources  
One Natural Resources Way  
Springfield, IL 62702  
Tel: 217-558-6621  
E-Mail: david.myers@illinois.gov

Thank you for taking the time to assist me in this research.

Sincerely,  
David J. Myers

This project has been reviewed and approved by the SIUC Human Subjects Committee. Questions concerning your rights as a participant in this research may be addressed to the Committee Chairperson, Office of Research Development and Administration, SIUC, Carbondale, IL 62901-4709. Phone (618) 453-4533. E-mail: [siuhsc@siu.edu](mailto:siuhsc@siu.edu)

David J. Myers  
Conservation Opportunity Areas Project Manager  
Southern Illinois University  
Department of Zoology  
Carbondale, IL 62901-6501  
Tel:(618)453-4126  
-or-(217)558-6621

## Appendix D. Reminder Emails

### REMINDER EMAIL #1:

**From:** Myers, David  
**Sent:** Monday, June 08, 2009 10:45 AM  
**To:** [Recipient e-mail address]  
**Subject:** !Reminder!: Request for Information Re: Conservation Opportunity Areas in IL  
 June 8, 2009

From: David J. Myers

Subject: Request for Information Re: Conservation Opportunity Areas in IL

**NOTE:** If you have taken the survey already, please disregard this email. Because of the anonymity of the survey format, we have no way of knowing who has participated, so everyone on the original list is receiving the reminder.

Thank you for reading through the following:

A few weeks ago, you received an e-mail asking for your input on planning and implementation needs of Conservation Opportunity Areas (COAs) identified in the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan (a map of the COAs is attached). As of today, we have received many responses, and we wish to thank those of you who have responded for your participation. We are writing again because our sample of agency and non-governmental agency representatives is relatively small, and we would like a response from nearly every individual contacted. Each response is valued and will make an important contribution to conservation planning in the state. We hope to hear from those of you that have not participated soon.

You may access the online survey at this Internet address:

[http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=8xdpmMbCSJ8v\\_2bKKPatTswA\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=8xdpmMbCSJ8v_2bKKPatTswA_3d_3d)

Attached is a PDF map of the COAs (StatewideOverview.pdf)

You have been selected to participate in this survey because you are a representative of an agency or non-governmental organization who may have insight about one or more Conservation Opportunity Areas. The data collected will be used to help guide natural resources efforts such as planning and on-the-ground implementation of habitat improvement practices in these areas. This survey will take an estimated 15 to 20 minutes to complete. All your responses will be kept confidential within reasonable limits. Only people directly involved with this project will have access to the surveys. A blind copy format will be used so that the list of recipients will not appear in the header. If you have significant knowledge about more than one COA that you would like to share, please feel free to complete the survey up to three times. Just follow the link from this email for each subsequent survey.

Completion and return of this survey indicates voluntary consent to participate in this study.

*If you wish to have your name removed from any future mailings associated with this survey, please reply to this e-mail with the message: "remove my name from the mailing list."*

*If you do not return the opt-out message, one final reminder message will be sent in the next two weeks.*

Questions about this study can be directed to

David J. Myers  
 Conservation Opportunity Area Project Manager  
 Illinois Department of Natural Resources  
 One Natural Resources Way  
 Springfield, IL 62702

Tel: 217-558-6621

E-Mail: [david.myers@illinois.gov](mailto:david.myers@illinois.gov)

Thank you for taking the time to assist me in this research.

Sincerely,  
David J. Myers

This project has been reviewed and approved by the SIUC Human Subjects Committee. Questions concerning your rights as a participant in this research may be addressed to the Committee Chairperson, Office of Research Development and Administration, SIUC, Carbondale, IL 62901-4709. Phone (618) 453-4533. E-mail: [siuhsc@siu.edu](mailto:siuhsc@siu.edu)

**REMINDER EMAIL #2:**

From: Myers, David

Sent: Tue 6/30/2009 5:40 PM

To: [Recipient e-mail address]

Subject: !Final Reminder--Survey will close Friday, July 3rd! Re: Conservation Opportunity Areas in Illinois

Hello!

We have had great participation in the Conservation Opportunity Areas Survey, and I want to thank everyone who has participated for all of the great input!

We will be closing the survey on Friday July 3rd, so if anyone wants to take it, and has not gotten around to it yet, now is the time.

You can access the survey at the following web address:

[http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=8xdpmMbCSJ8v\\_2bKKPatTswA\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=8xdpmMbCSJ8v_2bKKPatTswA_3d_3d)

Attached is the COA overview map that you may need to complete the survey.

Completion and return of this survey indicates voluntary consent to participate in this study.

This is the final message you will receive regarding this survey.

Questions about this study can be directed to David J. Myers, Conservation opportunity Areas Project Manager ([david.myers@illinois.gov](mailto:david.myers@illinois.gov))

Thank you for taking the time to assist me in this research.

Sincerely,  
David J. Myers

This project has been reviewed and approved by the SIUC Human Subjects Committee. Questions concerning your rights as a participant in this research may be addressed to the Committee Chairperson, Office of Research Development and Administration, SIUC, Carbondale, IL 62901-4709. Phone (618) 453-4533. E-mail: [siuhsc@siu.edu](mailto:siuhsc@siu.edu) <<mailto:siuhsc@siu.edu>>

David J. Myers  
Conservation Opportunity Areas Project Manager  
Southern Illinois University  
Department of Zoology  
Carbondale, IL 62901-6501  
Tel:(618)453-4126  
-or-(217)558-6621

**Appendix E. Grouped responses under each coded factor for question 10**  
**Question 10- Please list the most important factors that have contributed to the success of the resource management plan.**

**1: Community/Landowners (outreach to and role of) 24 Responses**

1. Having landowners interested in participating
2. Good public support
3. Multi Agency/Stakeholder development and cross program implementation.
4. Increased awareness
5. Added awareness by private landowners of ecological importance of their property
6. private landowner relationship development by the NGO's
7. Making people aware of the high quality conditions in a watershed/stream
8. Development of relationships with landowners
9. Development of relationships with landowners
10. Motivated landowners
11. Working with private landowners to develop wildlife habitat on their property
12. Cooperative management plans with willing landowners
13. Landowner cooperation and belief in management goals
14. Widespread awareness of the plan and outreach to local planners and public officials
15. Continue to work with private landowners in managing their forests
16. If plan has local community based support, including an active watershed or interest group and buy-in of local communities
17. Landowner ownership and commitment
18. The Upper Des Plaines Ecosystem Partnership has been very effective in providing education and awareness on the river's needs throughout Lake County.
19. The process brings the important effectiveness to the attention to others.
20. More of the public and local agencies have gotten on board. with conservation
21. Local involvement
22. Working with all stakeholders.
23. Private landowner participation
24. Citizen involvement

**2: Funding: 21 Responses**

1. The Prairie Plan would occasionally be stagnant without the help of partnerships to help finance large projects
2. Availability of funding for implementing forestry plans on private lands
3. Well staffed and funded restoration through the USDA Forest Service
4. Funding
5. Agency staff are very engaged in this resource area and have been able to bring money, effort and programs to the table.
6. Federal aid funding
7. Funding for some habitat restoration work
8. Early initial energy and Funding from C2000 for Conservation Easement to protect forestland
9. initial capital funding for protection projects
10. Documenting important factors/need to refer to when applying for funding
11. seed money towards capital to protect land
12. Money
13. Availability of grant funds i.e. C-2000 program ,etc.
14. Funding to hire resource management contractors.
15. if plan has resources/funding attached to it or made available because of it (IE- UEPA's 319 plans)available to provide protection/management
16. the ability to secure outside funding to leverage super fund dollars.
17. Grant programs to purchase conservation lands
18. Grant money to do projects and expand monitoring efforts.
19. Plans alone do nothing; it is the implementation that is important. The problem has been lack of both State and Federal funding to implement plans

20. EPA funding.
21. IDNR partnership and funding/the Conservation Reserve Program

### **3: goals & objectives for implementation: 10 Responses**

1. strong partnership (JVP) with clear objectives
2. Having details and goals to refer to.
3. Well-defined objectives;
4. policy
5. Monitoring and implementation of ideas.
6. Clear goals and implementation plan
7. Someone to implement and move forward
8. The main issue with the plan(s) is going to be implementation. I think they set out good goals, but the mechanisms for bringing them to fruition really fall to individual stakeholders, and there isn't a good mechanism for collective action.
9. Local planning efforts that address conservation needs, goals, and objectives.
10. Defined objectives within the Nature Preserve Master Plans.

### **4: Government/Agencies/NGO Support: 17 Responses**

1. Federal Projects, NGO projects, State projects
2. Well staffed and funded restoration through the USDA Forest Service
3. Willingness of land management agencies
4. commitment from the Land Management Agencies to do the work
5. Regional support---State support
6. Early initial energy and Funding from C2000 for Conservation Easement to protect forestland
7. good cooperation from IDNR Forestry in the COA process
8. local NGO groups working specifically in the COA area private landowner relationship development by the NGOs
9. State & Federal allocation of Department of Defense base closure Research by IDNR and INHS for the project area
10. user friendly USDA crop retirement programs
11. Working with federal agencies and NGOs to assist landowners in developing wildlife habitat.
12. Strong support from private not-for-profit and constituency groups
13. role of non-profit volunteer and advocacy groups
14. important factors will likely include collaboration with state and federal agencies,
15. An increasingly aware and sensitive local political/municipal representatives.
16. More of the public and local agencies have gotten on board. with conservation
17. Local zoning ordinances and regulations

### **5: Leadership/Motivation: 7 Responses**

1. Ability to motivate volunteers
2. leadership
3. [redacted] [individual's name omitted]
4. Someone to implement and move forward
5. local volunteer leadership among several KREP member organizations and individuals.
6. Ability of Natural Heritage Biologist Brad Semel to balance many priorities; and accomplish much at Illinois Beach State Park
7. follow-up and see something actually happens

### **6: Organization/Coordination: 11 Responses**

1. Excellent organizational skills of group
2. Clifftop Alliance is very organized in their approach to implementation of the plan
3. Good coordination
4. Planning as far in advance as possible.
5. Annual plan of work (POW) meetings
6. Prioritizing land acquisition
7. Coordinating management efforts with site personnel and other agency professionals

8. Identification of resources
9. Identifying resource needs
10. Working with other natural resource managers to coordinate management of public land sites
11. a good mechanism for collective action

### **7: Partnerships: 20 Responses**

1. strong partnership (JVP) with clear objectives
2. The Prairie Plan would occasionally be stagnant without the help of partnerships to help finance large projects
3. Partnerships
4. Commitment of Lake County Forest Preserve Partnerships - LCSMC, IDNR
5. partnerships
6. collaboration with other partners
7. Multi Agency/Stakeholder development and cross program implementation.
8. Coordination between agencies and dept sections.
9. The plan was developed over a period of several years with the input of many different agencies and constituents.
10. partnering
11. Many agencies involved as a checks and balance
12. local conservation partnerships with local NGO groups
13. Collaboration with all conservation stakeholders
14. Collaboration with all conservation stakeholders Development of relationships with landowners seed money towards capital to protect land
15. Partnership support
16. Multi -organizational Development
17. buy in by partners
18. Working with all stakeholders.
19. Local wildlife habitat groups or others that do habitat work can be helpful
20. formation and active involvement of the Cache River Joint Venture Partnership members

### **8: Personnel/ Volunteers: 16 Responses**

1. Having people that are able to help implement them
2. Midewin's volunteer staff is essential to the restoration, monitoring, education, interpretation, and recreation programs.
3. Committed Personnel in it for the long term
4. Shawnee NF has large staff available to implement their plan
5. Involving volunteers
6. Well staffed and funded restoration through the USDA Forest Service
7. Agency staff are very engaged in this resource area and have been able to bring money, effort and programs to the table.
8. dedicated staff
9. Great staff at RC&D
10. Coordinating management efforts with site personnel and other agency professionals
11. ORC Staff generally have a cross disciplinary perspective and accept views of other Divisions
12. Resource managers
13. JVP staff members for whom resource conservation is a way of life, not just a job
14. Funding to hire resource management contractors.
15. staff to implement
16. good group of volunteers

### **9: Specific Characteristics of Plan: 11 Responses**

1. Written by experienced resource managers. It has been re-done several times and peer reviewed.
2. Updated management plans
3. resource evaluated and population guided management techniques
4. Proven methodologies; Monitoring, evaluation, adaptive mgt

5. Provide documentation for important resources to provide justification for additional land acquisition and protection
6. The plan was developed over a period of several years with the input of many different agencies and constituents.
7. IDNR plan that has received multi-discipline peer review; professionally written plan
8. Monitoring and implementation of ideas.
9. The plan defines an area that it must work in (buffer area on each side of stream) The plan defines what are acceptable practices
10. The IDNR-IEPA Basin Surveys list areas that are excellent as far as aquatic life and water quality, but also list those areas that are impaired
11. Utilization and implementation of the plan Monitoring the plan and on-ground progress

#### **10: Environmental Resources/Management: 16 Responses**

1. Focused on the most important rare species and habitats
2. Habitat restoration and species recovery.
3. Conducting natural resource restoration Prescribed burns
4. Available Ecological Resources
5. The amount and quality of existing natural resources land (state and federal)
6. Funding for some habitat restoration work Identifying species of conservation concern
7. Restoration of de-forested areas to address fragmentation
8. poor soils, hydrology, and quality hunting in region
9. We have taken land out of production and established functioning wetlands. We have started the succession process toward a higher quality wetland by planting wetland species on the sites. The hydrology must be correct for the site to function as a wetland.
10. We have taken land out of production and established functioning wetlands. We have started the succession process toward a higher quality wetland by planting wetland species on the sites. The hydrology must be correct for the site to function as a wetland.
11. consistent data sampling over time
12. Identifying limiting factors Identifying threats to resources
13. Ability to conduct prescribed burning Designation of forest-interior habitat units
14. Ability to conduct prescribed burning throughout the area--with exception of wilderness. Designation and protection of forest-interior habitat units.
15. Habitat improvement Filter strips General cleanup
16. growing appreciation for the benefits of proper resource management,

#### **11: Information & Training: 4 Responses**

1. Good local data and knowledge included in these.
2. INAI inventory work coupled with state historical site file information
3. information
4. training

#### **12- Land Ownership: 8 Responses**

1. Large amount of protected land (state and federal)
2. Protection via long term easement of critical areas
3. Land and water is on State Owned land
4. Land ownership(govt)
5. Conservation Easements
6. ability to conduct work on private sites that do not have permanent legal protection agreements
7. ability to work on both private and public lands
8. if there is substantial amount of land permanently protected within area - publically owned by Natural Resource agency - county or state, local PD with resource expertise, or under highly restrictive easement IE under land conservancy of INPC site

#### **13- IDNR: 1 Response**

1. IDNR partnership and funding/the Conservation Reserve Program

## Appendix F. Grouped responses under each coded factor for question 11

**Question 11- Please list the most important factors that have reduced the success of the resource management plan.**

### 1- Community/Landowners 13 Responses

1. lack of support for landowners.
2. Lack of financial and popular support for land protection and forest stewardship (i.e., long history of law suits over use of fire, timber harvest, pesticides)
3. poor public support
4. Users are not made aware of efforts.
5. landowner interest. Public participation.
6. developing relationships with private landowners to protection & manage land
7. must include working with private landowners on resource management and protection projects.
8. Not all conservation stakeholders are capable or interested in active resource protection and management
9. Insufficient public outreach
10. Development of a plan that unduly taxes the resources of the landowner. Development of a plan that takes away the land ownership rights and expects financial output for minimal returns (either fiscally or psychologically) to the landowner and the environment.
11. Developers not getting on board
12. Not enough support from community
13. Lack of public interest
14. Ineffective effort to address the need to fund/sustain private stewardship.

### 2- Funding: 46 Responses

1. Lack of financial and popular support for land protection and forest stewardship (i.e., long history of law suits over use of fire, timber harvest, pesticides)
2. The budget is required to be allocated with too little flexibility for projects. Employees are advised to predict future spending, allocate money to specific projects, and then use it or lose it. Also, money that was available has been redirected to help with wild fire control.
3. We don't have the resources to meet the goals in the plan.
4. Lack of Time/Money
5. Financial support from agencies.
6. Limited funding
7. Funding
8. Irregular funding.
9. Budget and lack of staffing and equipment
10. Limited budgets and staff
11. Budget
12. Lack of adequate funding and support for additional land acquisition at Prairie Ridge for threatened and endangered grassland wildlife.
13. No funds for land acquisition
14. budget shortfalls
15. Economy--Financial concerns---Old ways of doing things
16. Lack of Funding
17. Lack of funding for certain projects
18. Lack of adequate funding for easement program (i.e. huge backlog of unfunded applications)
19. Lack of site staff, lack of funding to accomplish desired activities
20. no local financial support for resource protection
21. people get burned out especially when there is no gov't support or funding - demise of C2000 program hurt very badly
22. Funding for chemicals, equipment, and contractors
23. Lack of funds
24. budget issues, etc.
25. Implementation funding on Illinois
26. Money

27. Lack of funding
28. Lack of funds to provide habitat.
29. lack of funding
30. Insufficient funding
31. lack of staff, time and resources
32. lack of staff, time and resources
33. lack of staff, time and resources
34. Lack of funds
35. lack of appropriate funding
36. no clear funding available to kick-start activities for management
37. the ability to secure outside funding to leverage super fund dollars
38. Lack of funding or manpower
39. Lack of funds to implement the plan
40. Lack of sufficient funding to implement conservation efforts of local entities;
41. Lack of funding for programs
42. Lack of money
43. Lack of economic incentives
44. Lack of funding
45. Funding limitations
46. Need to develop long-term funding for beach nourishment program to stabilize/reduce erosion.

### **3- Goals & Objectives for Implementation: 6 Responses**

1. Unrealistic goals
2. conflicting priorities within agency
3. unexploded ordinance cleanup
4. Lack of program direction
5. define objectives and goals differently
6. Reporting what the next step is lacking.

### **4- Government/Agencies/NGO Support: 15 Responses**

1. Assistance to ngo's suffers
2. For the Shawnee NF the amount of documentation and public review can be overwhelming (NEPA)
3. Limited support from Springfield or Regional level in following through with the Recovery Plans
4. death of C2000 and subsequent inability of local land trust to grow effectively
5. death of C2000 and subsequent inability of local land trust to grow effectively
6. parcelization of property in the COA funding from state and federal agencies for resource protection
7. people get burned out especially when there is no gov't support or funding - demise of C2000 program hurt very badly
8. lack of interest from municipal staff and elected officials
9. Bureaucratic red tape. Time lags moving paperwork through system.
10. a political mindset that views plan as the "enemy" - usually developers, development minded
11. collaboration with state and federal agencies, ownership by local and state chapters of NWTf
12. appeals to proposed USFS management
13. Loss of state financial support. Unconcern by the IEPA to enforce local erosion when asked to, time and time again.
14. Lack of funding for programs and staff from state and federal sources.
15. bureaucracy, poorly coordinated or even conflicting government programs (including subsidies to agriculture)

### **5- Leadership/Motivation: 11 Responses**

1. lack of incentive
2. Grasping the big picture (ecosystem complex), making this a regional priority
3. Lack of leadership toward implementation of Wildlife Action Plan
4. Inability to act quickly to immediate resource protection

5. Lack of funds, leadership
6. lack of staff, time and resources
7. lack of staff, time and resources
8. lack of professional staff, time and resources
9. Lack of commitment and follow through
10. no "champion's" of the plan
11. no one to do those things listed in 10 (Someone to follow-up and see something actually happens  
Local wildlife habitat groups or others that do habitat work can be helpful)

#### **6: Organization/Coordination: 8 Responses**

1. Lack of coordination
2. poor coordination
3. one DWB and site staff to address too many aspects of the plan
4. Commitment & coordination of information has limited any long term management plan.
5. The area is so large, its hard to get everyone to a meeting.
6. lack of coordination across state lines, distance to Army Corps office
7. poorly coordinated or even conflicting government programs (including subsidies to agriculture)

#### **7: Partnerships: 3 Responses**

1. Limited Partnerships
2. Lack of agreement between JVP and other socio-political entities, i.e. the Big Creek Drainage District concerning JVP recommendations regarding appropriate conservation measures to restore Cache River hydrology.
3. No partnership approach.

#### **8: Personnel/ Volunteers: 23 Responses**

1. Critical positions go unfilled.
2. Limited personnel
3. Marginal staffing levels
4. lack of staffing
5. Limited budgets and staff
6. personnel constraints
7. Limited staff for implementing the plans
8. manpower shortage to implement certain facets of the plan
9. Lack of site staff
10. Lack of follow up due to all volunteer involvement
11. Lack of staff and staff assistance due to layoffs and un-filled vacancies
12. Lack of field staff to provide elevated outreach
13. Lack of Staff
14. Lack of clericals that keep biologists in the office
15. 3. Insufficient staff
16. lack of staff
17. lack of staff
18. lack of staff
19. Lack of staff to implement the plan
20. Lack of funding or manpower
21. Need to locally financially support a KREP staff person.
22. Lack of funding for programs and staff from state and federal sources.
23. no one to do those thing listed in 10 (Someone to follow-up and see something actually happens  
Local wildlife habitat groups or others that do habitat work can be helpful)

#### **9: Specific Characteristics of Plan: 3 Responses**

1. The area is so large, its hard to get everyone to a meeting.
2. lack of coordination across state lines, distance to Army Corps office
3. poorly coordinated or even conflicting government programs (including subsidies to agriculture)

**10: Ecological Aspects/Management: 15 responses**

1. difficulty, to date, restoring hydrology by reconnecting the upper and lower Cache
2. the fire crew may not be available to fulfill prescribed burn needs while they are deployed.
3. multiple use where it can't be accommodated
4. Resource plans are site specific and fail to address entire COA. Also COA with Lake-McHenry Co complex needs boundary change.
5. weather conditions
6. Outside influences - invasive species, silt in water
7. Invasive Species Hydrology
8. Invasive Species linked with hydrological changes
9. Invasive Species
10. non-game wildlife, plant, and rare and high quality community management in state-owned areas that are satellite sites assigned to larger fish and game focused sites.
11. Invasive non-native weeds, like reed canary grass and cattails have been our biggest problem. Late summer floods have also made it difficult for plant establishment.
12. Invasive non-native weeds, like reed canary grass and cattails have been our biggest problem. Late summer floods have also made it difficult for plant establishment.
13. off-site impacts such as siltation, water pollution, alteration in hydrology that emanate from unprotected or unmanaged areas
14. we apply management inconsistently and we have no consistent monitoring protocol to judge success.
15. Need to develop long-term funding for beach nourishment program to stabilize/reduce erosion.

**11: Information & Training: 3 Responses**

1. site staff assigned management responsibility need to be personnel trained
2. Unknown resources knowledge (i.e. scientific research of high quality habitats and site specific presence of SGNC's)
3. In order to be effective, you need to know what resources are present

**12- Land Ownership: 7 responses**

1. Most private land owners don't do natural areas stewardship.
2. Land prices (for acquisition).
3. too small of land base - essential for protected areas to expand
4. Lack of adequate funding and support for additional land acquisition at Prairie Ridge for threatened and endangered grassland wildlife.
5. Difficulties working with the local redevelopment authority at Lost Mound Outside of Lost Mound
6. low landowner turnover
7. The limits of the work area The plan primarily is applied to public land only

**13- IDNR: 6 Responses**

1. The shrinking of IDNR is an issue. Critical positions go unfilled. Assistance to ngo's suffers.
2. On private lands staffing for IDNR is the biggest limitation;
3. Lack of support for overall IL-WAP in upper levels of the IDNR. This COA is functioning well despite the IDNR.
4. IDNR Lands is unable (do to budget and staffing) and in some important cases, unwilling to assist with non-game wildlife, plant, and rare and high quality community management in state-owned areas that are satellite sites assigned to larger fish and game focused sites. If Lands is to be assigned a leading role in managing such areas, site staff assigned management responsibility need to be personnel trained and committed to management of these type of resources.
5. Loss of IDNR credibility resulting from #1 above (didn't hold up our end of the bargain after selling this program to landowners)
6. long term landowner dislike of IDNR

## Appendix G. Additional comments grouped by primary theme

### Boundaries of COAs

Eastern Shawnee (30) It was difficult for me to comment on the planning questions due to the specificity of COA's. The NAWTMP is broken into Bird Conservation Region plans, which cover much larger territories than COA's. I could probably submit a survey for a number of COA's but decided that the Eastern Shawnee was most representative of the Central Hardwoods BCR. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sinkhole Plain (26) see comments on southern hill prairie corridor concerning the need to consider these two COAs as one in many respects

Hill Prairie Corridor-South Section (26) Please note that this COA is operating as a mix of the sinkhole plain and southern hill prairie corridor. These two areas are adjacent and integrated geographically, culturally, politically, and biologically in such a way as to make their separation problematic and likely very inefficient. Also, the map #'s for the COA of southern hill prairie corridor and what I saw earlier on the first page of this survey may not have been the same. You may want to check on that. Thanks for the opportunity to comment. Much appreciated.

Vermilion River (20) When you listed the Vermilion River as a Resource Conservation area you list it as Vermilion River of the Wabash Drainage since there are 2 Vermilion Rivers.

Midewin (14) I am not as familiar with this COA area as I would like to be. I think it would have been important to include Chicago Wilderness areas within the survey including Cook and counties to the west such as DuPage, etc. This is where land is being lost to development and impacts to natural areas and wildlife habitat are the most serious, in my opinion. Impacts to water quality and wetlands are also critical here. This is where the highest population concentrations occur and where funding is needed to preserve and restore existing natural areas, partner with local forest preserve districts and park districts, provide outreach programs and education materials for landowners on the importance of private involvement in conservation of resources and provide more incentives for volunteer involvement. Although this may not be pertinent to this survey, it might not be a bad idea to reschedule the Conservation Congress and invite stakeholders to become active with their constituency groups to work toward better protection of resources and funding to accomplish the enormous challenges faced in Illinois today.

Upper Des Plaines River Corridor (8) This COA area should be increased to include the river corridor in Lake County and northern Cook County. The wildlife resources in these areas are some of the best in the state including several federally and state listed species as well as a critical migratory flyway for forest interior species.

Illinois Beach-Chiwaukeee Prairie (7) This COA area needs to be extended southwards to include the ravine communities in southern lake and northern cook counties. While this is an Illinois program we should look to partner with Wisconsin if at all possible. This is probably one of most ecologically rich areas in Illinois and we need to get it on the front page of the newspaper for the good things that are happening there and the importance of this area for these resources

Lake-McHenry Wetland Complex (6) This COA area should include the Glacial Park area and other resource areas along the Fox River. Please contact myself or Steve Byers to insure the COA includes these important areas. This COA was identified by Chicago Wilderness' Wetland Conservation Strategy as the largest collection of basin marshes and wetland resources of the six county area around Chicago. Great opportunities exist in this COA for benefits to wildlife if the appropriate funding is made available.

Lake-McHenry Wetland Complex (6) Need to change the boundary of the Lake-McHenry Co COA to expand to west to include Boone Creek Valley and Nippersink in Glacial Park, North Branch Preserve owned by McHenry Co Conservation District.

Kishwaukee River (5) The boundaries IDNR has established are illogical and understated. The headwaters of the main stem and the South branch of the Kishwaukee in De Kalb County are home to pollution intolerant, uncommon and threatened mussel and fish species where inventories have taken place. The headwater streams, seeps, and springs where inventories haven't taken place would seem to have great potential. It's hard to understand how a COA would, in the Kishwaukee basin, focus on a portion of the main stem downstream and vulnerable to upstream growth and development on rich headwater streams, which you've placed outside of your COA thus sending signals to local governments that these headwater streams are not important. The IDNR has certainly set the stage for losing the core by letting the headwaters face deterioration by a state designation of "outside the Conservation Opportunity Area." How would you recommend we local stakeholders comment on major IDOT projects, IEPA permits, etc. when we try to make the case for darters and slippershell mussels, and IDOT and IEPA respond that the project is not in a COA?

### **Land use and private landowner support**

Lower Kaskaskia Bottomlands (23) This COA received much attending in early days of C2000 (1995-2000) w/ much buy-in from private landowners (virtually entire corridor is privately owned). They were promised a chance to protect their private property rights by entering into easements with IDNR (instead of having USFWS establish a refuge as was previously planned), after a few early successes, we pulled the rug out from under them (decided easements weren't economical, state was broke anyway) and left many of them disenchanted. Much good will has been eroded but landowners doing good things on their own thru OKAW (private conservation group).

Prairie Ridge Landscape (22) Currently, additional land acquisition is needed to provide adequate grasslands to maintain genetic integrity of Illinois greater prairie chickens and other grassland wildlife.

Vermilion River (20) The large portion of land in any COA is privately owned and primarily in agricultural production. This is the group that needs to be reached out to and the group that needs to do the most. Ag producers will not change the way they operate over night or even 10-20 years. The pace of change (as far as their relation to conservation and wildlife) in the ag community is GENERATIONAL. What this means is that long-lasting positive change will take 30-60 years. This type of change needs a dedicated amount of time and money over decades to have substantial positive impacts. Public lands are being managed for our natural resources and with some success. Once again time and money are the issue here as well. The exotic species control is focused on targeted areas and is subject funding issues. Additional focus should be spent working with private landowners who have unique natural features (rare plant communities, endanger species, etc).

Siloam Springs (19) I am very concerned that I am going to lose some or all ability to work with private landowners who are not yet willing to commit to permanent legal protection prior. There is simply not staff available devote the time necessary to achieve these permanent legal agreements except in the situation when financial incentives are provided i.e. CRP, WRP, CREP, etc. When no financial incentives are available few rural landowners are willing to sign permanent or temporary legal agreement restricting their use.

Upper Mississippi River (12) Fragmentation of larger parcels into smaller and smaller parcels is a major concern and problem, coupled with lack of scientific information and interest by scientific community to obtain information. This included with lack of funding for resource protection and management is a three way default that we must overcome.

Lower Fox River (13) The Lower Fox has some very important scenic attributes in addition to its ecological importance. Its scenic beauty can provide the basis for strong, regional or statewide public support as well as providing the very real, immediate threat to its protection (i.e., "Fox River Dells"). We have seen large marinas and tourist attractions underway and in the planning stages. Time is of the essence!

Lake-McHenry Wetland Complex (6) Is also under heavy threat from advancing development, even during these downturn times. Land is also extremely expensive, making protection difficult. Plus this wetlands complex is under heavy threat from public overuse in Chain o lakes wetlands/lake complex and in our gravel hill savanna areas/fens and other areas from - how can this best be said? - "motorheads" who have no respect for any species save themselves, their speedboats, ATV's, etc.

Apple River (2) This COA will take very long term timelines to achieve results due to an extremely long river length with two large INAI sites. Biggest hurdles are land use practices immediately along the INAI sites but also landowner receptivity towards resource protection and very low landowner turnover.

Kishwaukee River (5) It is important to continue to protect and conserve land and water resources, enhance and restore natural habitat and surface and groundwater functions by public agencies. However, it is equally important to extend and provide outreach for private stewardship - most conservation land is privately owned and managed, and most public conservation agencies have definitive limits to how much land they can effectively own and manage. Data is lacking on many ecological elements - threatened and endangered species, invasive species (native and non-native), baseline water quality, habitat degradation, etc.

### **Engagement of partners and public support**

Cache River-Cypress Creek (31) An essential component for successful planning and implementation will be the long-term commitment of Partner Agencies, organizations and groups, especially the core members. Failure by any one of these entities can/will be catastrophic. Each Partner must be personally represented by a staff member(s) that is intimately involved with day-to-day operations in the Partnership. Each Partner organization must be committed to both the position and person without exception or excuse. Any successful and effective team has the support of dedicated and committed leadership. This commitment to being part of a team is in my opinion, non-negotiable. Failure by leadership to do everything within its means to maintain their relationship through a physical, active presence is an obscenity, especially if that presence is established and then eliminated.

Eastern Shawnee (30) There is an Association of Landowners called the Southeastern Illinois Prescribed Burn Association that is working to facilitate more burning on state and private lands. This group could be an important partner in implementing conservation plans in the area.

Hill Prairie Corridor-North Section (25) Please let local land trusts participate in this process. We were totally overlooked in the IL-WAP.

Mason County Sand Areas (17) Semi-annual (every other year) meetings with resource managers and other stakeholders should be scheduled to exchange ideas and information. A web site should be designed and maintained by IDNR with basic information about the COA, status of resources, updates on implementation of management plans, and links to relevant information.

Green River (11) I don't believe each cooperating agency or stakeholder group shares the same amount of interest in the CP-33 - SAFE program that can drive COA's to reach their potential. I have a limited amount of time to spend on the CP -33 programs. I understand from FSA District Conservationists that landowner interest in the CP -33 programs has been low at best; we can probably do a better job of selling this program.

Wisconsin Driftless Forest (1) The biggest comment would be to engage the local conservation partners in any agency planning, inventory, or implementation projects. Currently this isn't effectively happening, i.e. COA configuration input was not solicited and INAI update has not involve anyone actively working locally and this degrades the efficacy of natural resource management and protection work.

Lost Mound (3) The area of lost mound will take continued partnerships with all conservation partners to work with re-development initiatives to find common ground and joint projects that all stakeholders can't say no to. Currently the efforts wax and wane and there is not a consistent effort to work on the Lost Mound issues.

Kishwaukee River (5) Even more pressing - is an effect measure of informing the public and gaining public support for conservation. We can't depend on regulation to protect important ecological functions and values - Many of the areas that still provide important ecological functions and values exist because of private stewardship. We need to find a way to sustain that.

### **Issues with implementation/ support**

Cache River-Cypress Creek (31) Over the last several years staffing and budget reductions as well as aging equipment and resources has reduced our ability to properly manage the resource

Wabash River (28) This river COA really is located in the forgotten part of Illinois, over the years it has received almost no support or interest from any state agency or other conservation group and I really don't expect this to change. It's not located near any major urban areas or universities so it's not been considered important to most people in Illinois and I don't expect this to change.

Prairie Ridge Landscape (22) This COA is a prime example of the of recovery plans, habitat plans etc. that are developed and then never implemented in a manner that will restore critical habitats or protect the species of conservation concern.

Lower Kaskaskia Bottomlands (23) Once funds for conservation easements became unavailable through C2000, the local land trust spearheading protection of the Kaskaskia Macrosite Forest lost momentum

Prairie Ridge Landscape (22) Currently, additional land acquisition is needed to provide adequate grasslands to maintain genetic integrity of Illinois greater prairie chickens and other grassland wildlife.

Vermilion River (20) This will take someone to coordinate and provide leadership to get it done. With all funding difficult at this time it may be hard to get adequate participation.

Vermilion River (20) Agencies should be cautious about initiating broad, generalized mgmt goals for any COA. Efforts are more likely to succeed by providing a specific purpose and focus within the COA. Agency must also be prepared and committed to a long-term, close relationship with local partners. The expectation that eventually partners will be able to carry out the mgmt plans have rarely been realized - has been the exception far more than the rule.

Mason County Sand Areas (17) In order to be successful, you need to establish clear and unified goals and objectives. One way to do that would be to utilize an ecological land classification into Land Type Associations and finer scale mapping units which could then be utilized for site planning purposes. Lacking a unified "vision" any planning effort is somewhat handicapped at the beginning.

Lower LaMoine River (18) For these COA it is critical that we maintain and improve coordination with Ag Dept (NRCS/SWCD) as these programs have been the most effective and continue to be the best option for this area.

Mason County Sand Areas (17) Not enough staff. Emphasis and coordination for conservation work on private lands is weak among agencies (DNR, NRCS and FWS) - primarily due to staff shortages.

Kankakee Sands (15) Resource management plans are important, but it is the implementation that is what creates success or failure. Your questions don't really reflect what is happening or not happening in COAs. Question 12 needs to be revised. You ask about a plan being completed in 2 years, implementation in 3 years and then ask about success being measured in 3 years. Have you ever implemented a habitat project? Limited success may be seen quickly in vegetation/insect response, but it may take 4 to 10 years to see the response in the targeted populations. If you are controlling invasive species, you may see quick success.

Lower Fox River (13) There is a need to enhance the Fox River management plan to create a watershed-based plan with specific recommendations for restoration and protection.

Green River (11) There is no local leadership on habitat conservation in this area. It all falls on the back of IDNR and FWS.

Rock River (9) Funding for all natural resource agencies (SWCDs, IDNR, Partnerships) needs to be restored. There are volunteer groups out here but they need guidance from professionals.

Sugar - Pecatonica (4) The Sugar-Pecatonica Rivers Ecosystem Partnership has done some work on a Resource Management Plan but did not complete it due to lack of leadership and resources.

Apple River (2) There are several state-wide monitoring efforts (e.g., CTAP, and some state wildlife grant funded projects [e.g., T-13]) underway that do not appear to be directly involved in COA management or planning. Data from this monitoring could be useful for planning but I'm not sure how you would get these researchers involved in the planning process.

Lake-McHenry Wetland Complex (6) To date, other than what has happened under auspices of Chicago Wilderness and the personal interests/efforts of local IDNR, INPC, McHenry Co Conservation District, Lake Co Forest Preserve District to promote wetland resources and the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan; there has not been much emphasis/ or visible support from IDNR/Springfield to support this COA.

## **Successes**

Hill Prairie Corridor-South Section (26) This COA is up-and-running do to local efforts despite some fumbling from IDNR.

Lake-McHenry Wetland Complex (6) This particular COA is one of the more "advanced" in collaboration of the COA areas in Illinois with many entities working in this arena - both private and public.

Kishwaukee River (5) The kishwaukee River Ecosystem Partnership is one of the most innovative conservation groups in the state!!!! We have partnered with winnebago and boone county to develop a greenways plan, worked on marengo union watershed plan, and funded Natural land institutes protection of 100s of acres of habitat on the south branch with conservation easements called clear water legacy, worked with CMAP to update 3 subwatershed plans in the kish. And basically maintain a constant vigilance for construction site erosion and sewage treatment plants. Visit our website <http://krep.bios.niu.edu> to learn more and download our plans. PS how can the Partnerships be more involved in the development of these COAs and the plan - we have much to share.

Kishwaukee River (5) The Kishwaukee River Ecosystem Partnership has done most of the work on developing a resource management plan for the watershed and detailed watershed plans for three tributaries.

**Other Comments**

Eastern Shawnee (30) really need more information on the COA concept this survey is basically my introduction

Wabash River (28) I have nothing to do with the management of this area, or any other areas designated on the map.

Lower Kaskaskia Bottomlands (23) Contact the Southwestern Illinois RC&D [names omitted]. This organization has a lot of time & effort invested in this Resource Rich Area.

Pere Marquette (21) Note: As a [position omitted], and not a DNR staffer, I do not know if a COA exists for the Pere Marquette Area. I have a longtime interest in the biology and ecology of the region and will try to find out if there is a COA and study it. There is at least one more candidate for nature preserve status within the park and that needs to be promoted also. I did the best I could with this survey given the above disclaimer so treat these results as attitudinal rather than as analytical.

Prairie Ridge Landscape (22) Good Job!

Lower LaMoine River (18) Contact me for additional information

Middle Illinois River (16) Include me in Lake-McHenry County morainal wetlands COA and LaRue Pine Hills lower Mississippi River bottomlands COA.

Green River (11) This is one of the first contacts regarding COAs that we are aware of. Recently NLI contacted me to become involved with the Green River COA and they are setting a meeting date. We wish to assist in any way that we can. Thank you.

Rock River (9) I answered this survey in reference to our wetland mitigation sites. I hope this is what you wanted.

Rock River (9) This is the first I have heard of COAs and the plans developed to assist habitat recovery. I am certainly interested in learning more and look forward to its progress.

Sugar - Pecatonica (4) a very extensive survey.