Pennsylvania Wildlife Action Plan (PA WAP) 2025-2035 Public Review Draft

Watershed Impacts Comment Suggestions: Road Salt and Water Quality

The Pennsylvania Game Commission and Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission are accepting public comments on the draft **2025-2035 Pennsylvania Wildlife Action Plan (WAP)**. The plan guides conservation efforts for wildlife, habitats, threats, and conservation actions across Pennsylvania for the next decade. Submit comments on the draft online through the Wildlife Action Plan public review process. The public comment period ends **September 19**.

Review the draft and submit comments here:
https://www.pa.gov/agencies/pgc/wildlife/wildlife-action-plan.html

The following sample comments focus on the effects of excess road salt on streams, wetlands, groundwater, wildlife habitat, and Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). Feel free to modify them and submit in your own words.

Please begin your first comment with something positive, like "While I am grateful to see road salt and salinity being addressed in the plan I have the following recommendations…"

Note that each comment will need to be entered separately, so submit only the number of comments that you have time for. **Submitting at least one comment shows your (or your group's) concern for the impacts of road salt and is much better then submitting no comments at all.**

Sample Comments:

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1. Chapter 2: Habitats - Streams and Rivers

Comment: The Streams and Rivers section discusses agricultural runoff, sedimentation, and urban pollution but does not specifically recognize chloride pollution from road salt. Excess chloride is an increasing water-quality concern in Pennsylvania streams and should be included among the threats affecting aquatic habitats and wildlife.

Relevant Pages

- Page 2-29: Water Quality discussion
- Page 2-30: Water Quality discussion continues; urban runoff and highway impacts discussed

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2. Chapter 2: Habitats - Wetlands

Comment: The Wetlands section should acknowledge road salt runoff as a potential threat to wetlands located near roads, parking lots, and developed areas. Chloride contamination can alter wetland conditions and affect amphibians, aquatic invertebrates, and other wetland-dependent species.

Relevant Pages

- Page 2-24 through 2-27: Wetlands overview
- Page 2-26 through 2-27: Wetland condition and importance

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3. Chapter 2: Habitats - Research and Monitoring Needs

Comment: The plan should include chloride monitoring and freshwater salinization trends among its habitat monitoring priorities. Tracking conductivity and chloride levels would help identify vulnerable watersheds and evaluate conservation success over time.

Relevant Pages

- Page 2-48: Research and Monitoring Needs
- Page 2-49: Discussion of aquatic monitoring and water-quality monitoring

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4. Chapter 3: Threats - Pollution

Comment: Road salt should be specifically identified as a source of pollution affecting aquatic ecosystems. Including chloride contamination among recognized water-quality threats would better reflect current challenges facing Pennsylvania streams, wetlands, lakes, and groundwater.

Relevant Pages

Chapter 3, pp. 35-36 and pp. 40-41.

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5. Chapter 3: Threats - Aquatic Habitat Degradation

Comment: The Threats chapter should recognize freshwater salinization as a contributor to habitat degradation. Elevated chloride levels can impact water quality and

reduce the suitability of habitat for sensitive aquatic species and other Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

Relevant Pages

Chapter 3, pp. 35-36 and pp. 40-41.

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6. Chapter 4: Conservation Actions - Education and Training

Comment: The Conservation Actions chapter should include winter maintenance training and salt-reduction best practices as examples of conservation education. Training municipal staff, contractors, and property managers in winter salting effects and best practices can reduce chloride pollution while maintaining public safety.

Relevant Pages

- Page 4-24: Education and Training
- Page 4-25: Training and Individual Skill Development

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7. Chapter 4: Conservation Actions - Research and Monitoring

Comment: The plan should identify chloride monitoring as a conservation action for aquatic habitats. Collecting long-term data on chloride concentrations would improve understanding of road-salt impacts and help measure the effectiveness of reduction efforts.

Relevant Pages

- Page 4-23: Research and Monitoring
- Page 4-24: Basic Research and Status Monitoring

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8. Chapter 4: Conservation Actions - General Conservation Actions

Comment: Appendix 4.4 should include a general conservation action encouraging the use of winter road salt best management practices. Reducing excess salt application is a practical action that protects streams, wetlands, groundwater, and wildlife habitat while supporting safe winter travel.

Relevant Pages

- Page 4-27: General Conservation Actions
- Page 4-28: Table 4.3 General Conservation Actions

Short Overall Comment

Comment: While I am grateful to see road salt and salinity being addressed in the plan I have the following recommendation. The draft WAP thoroughly addresses many sources of habitat degradation but gives little attention to freshwater salinization caused by road salt. I encourage the agencies to incorporate chloride pollution, monitoring, and salt-reduction best management practices throughout the Habitat, Threats, and Conservation Actions chapters to better protect Pennsylvania's waters and wildlife.