

Midwest Conservation Blueprint Indicators

The Midwest Landscape Initiative (MLI) vision and goals provide a target and desired future state for the landscape that spans a wide array of social and ecological benefits. The following indicators are the targetable, important features of the goals to prioritize areas for conservation. We use the term 'indicator' as analogous to 'target' as described in the Conservation Standards framework.

Indicators were defined through elicitation and prioritization exercises with federal and state participants. Criteria for the indicators include: actionable, measurable, relevant to multiple groups across the region, and/or representative of other social and environmental values. Each indicator was associated with one or more spatial datasets (see below for more details), which were then used to prioritize core areas and corridors of regional importance through a spatial prioritization analysis. Over 50 staff members across 12 organizations helped identify, define, and/or review these indicators.

VISION: A thriving landscape of healthy lands and waters supporting wildlife, fish, and plants, embraced by all who live, work, and recreate in the Midwest



GOAL 1: By 2030, a 10% increase in health and connectedness of Midwest lands and waters, to include conservation of intact landscapes as well as restoration and enhancement of degraded landscapes

Aquatic Network Connectivity: Ability of aquatic species to move unimpeded across aquatic networks

Spatial data: Length of connected aquatic networks

Climate Resiliency: Ability of lands and waters to function under changing climate conditions

Spatial data: [TNC Resilient Land Mapping](#)

Streams: Stream condition regarding the risk of habitat degradation

Spatial data: [NFHP Habitat Condition Index](#)

Lakes: Condition regarding the availability of lake habitat

Spatial data: [LAGOS-US](#)

Great Lakes Shoreline and Dune Habitat*:

Condition regarding the availability of dune and shoreline habitat

Spatial data: [GLAHF Harmonized Shoreline Classification](#) & [LANDFIRE](#) Great Lakes Dune Habitat

Forests: Forest condition regarding the availability and risk mortality of forested stands

Spatial data: [USFS Insect and Disease Risk](#)

Terrestrial Habitat Connectivity: Ability of terrestrial species to move across the landscape

Spatial data: [ESRI Habitat Cost Surface](#)

Intact Habitat Cores: Large, unfragmented patches of habitat

Spatial data: [ESRI Intact Habitat Cores](#)

Wetlands: Condition regarding the availability of wetland habitat

Spatial data: [USFWS National Wetland Inventory](#)

Riparian Areas: Riparian condition regarding the % of land area in floodplains classified as natural

Spatial data: [EPA Estimated Floodplains Data](#)

Grasslands: Grassland condition regarding the percent of perennial forbs and grasses

Spatial data: [Rangeland Analysis Platform % Grasses](#)

**We will be expanding the Midwest Conservation Blueprint to the waters of the Great Lakes in the coming years and expect to use the [State of the Great Lakes](#) Indicators in those areas.*



GOAL 2: By 2030, sustainable populations of wildlife, fish, and plant species.

At-risk Species (SGCN): Prevalence and population trend of species at risk of being threatened with extinction
Spatial data: State Conservation Opportunity Areas

Terrestrial Invasive Species: Prevalence and impact of plant and animal invasives in terrestrial habitats
Spatial data: *Currently N/A*

Culturally Important Plants: Prevalence and access to culturally important plants
Spatial data: *Currently N/A*

Imperiled Species (T&E): Prevalence and population trend of species listed as threatened or endangered
Spatial data: [NatureServe Imperiled Species Richness](#) & [FWS HQ Critical Habitat](#)

Aquatic Invasive Species: Prevalence of plant and animal invasives in aquatic habitats
Spatial data: # of species/acre by HUC-12

Game Species: Prevalence and access to socially important game species
Spatial data: *represented by proxy of other Indicators in Goals 1 and 2*



GOAL 3: By 2030, an increase in the relevance of nature and the practice of conservation and outdoor recreation behaviors of those who live, work, and recreate in the Midwest.

Water Quality and Availability: Quality and availability of drinking water for people
Spatial data: [USFS Surface Water Importance](#)

Sustainable Land-use Systems: Ability to economically sustain human communities (e.g., ag, forestry, etc.) while also providing conservation benefits
Spatial data: [National Conservation Easement Database](#)

Natural Resource Economics: Amount of Midwest economy that is derived from natural resources or associated activities
Spatial data: *Currently N/A*

Equitable Environmental Health: Vulnerability of communities to impacts of natural disasters, pollution, climate change, and other health burdens
Spatial data: [CDC Social Vulnerability Index & Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool](#)

Equitable Tree Canopy Cover: Tree canopy cover need in urban neighborhoods relative to demographic and environmental metrics
Spatial data: [American Forests Tree Equity Score](#)

Nutrient Reduction: Measure of nutrient loading that leads to hypoxia issues in downstream waters
Spatial data: [USGS Sparrow Model](#)

Public Recreation Access: Ability to enjoy outdoor spaces for recreation (e.g., hunting, birding, hiking, etc.) as well as physical and mental health purposes
Spatial data: [PAD-US Public Access Lands & Open Street Map Paths and Trails](#)

Equitable Quality of Life and Environmental Justice: *The following four indicators are grouped under the same theme to create an equitable quality of life with focus on historically underserved communities*

Tribal Nations Conservation Sovereignty: Ability of tribal nations to have access to, and control of, their natural and cultural resources
Spatial data: [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool](#)

Equitable Access to Recreation: Accessibility to green space and outdoor recreation in urban areas relative to demographic and environmental metrics
Spatial data: [ParkServe Priority Areas](#)