

# Midwest Conservation Blueprint Vision, Goals, Indicators & Data



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## Overview

This document outlines the conceptual “why” of the Midwest Conservation Blueprint. 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 values. 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 as input data layers of our prioritization analysis for the Midwest Conservation Blueprint. Over 50 staff members across 12 organizations helped identify, define, and/or review these indicators.

**See Page 2 for a visual depiction of the goals and indicators of the Midwest Conservation Blueprint.** The inner image reflects the Blueprint as a visual representation of the [vision of the MLI](#). The second ring visually represents the three distinct goals of the vision: (1) healthy, connected lands and waters, (2) sustainable populations of wildlife, and (3) functioning systems benefitting people. The third ring identifies the names of all discrete indicators (with clickable links to the input data layers used in the prioritization analysis). **See pages 3-4 for a written description of the vision, goals, indicators, and original source data.**

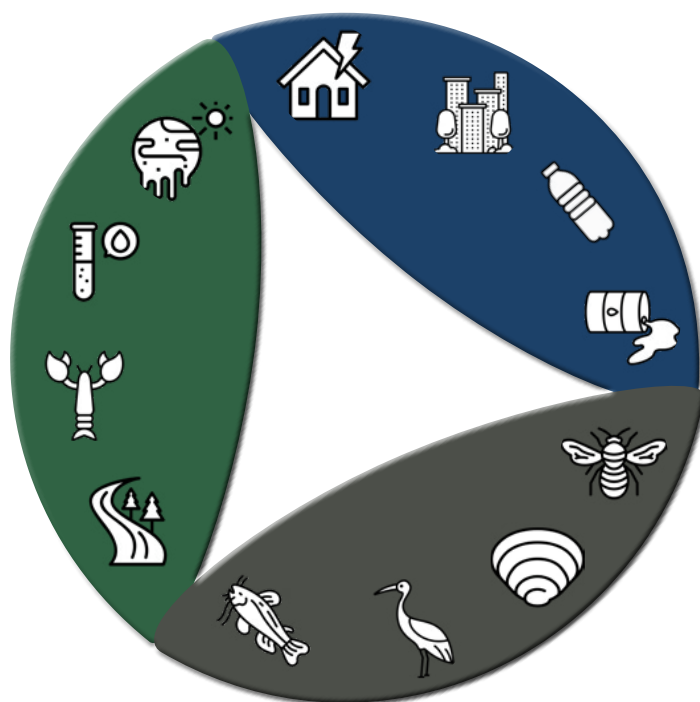
## Additional Documentation

For a full description outlining the detailed data management steps of each indicator, see our “Midwest Conservation Blueprint 2024 Development process” document which can be found at [tinyurl.com/midwestblueprint](https://tinyurl.com/midwestblueprint).

Permanent repository link for all final data products and supplementary documentation:  
<https://www.sciencebase.gov/catalog/item/64cac708d34e70357a355550>

Any questions, comments, or concerns can be directed to a staff member of the Midwest Landscape Initiative at [mlimidwest.org](mailto:mlimidwest.org).

Explore the indicators of a thriving landscape



Click on each indicator to discover more

**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

Data Source: [TNC Resilient River Explorer](#)

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

Data Source: [TNC Resilient Land Mapping](#) & [UNEP World Biomass and Soil Carbon](#)

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

Data Source: [Rangeland Analysis Platform % Grasses](#)

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

Data Source: [USFS Insect and Disease Risk](#) & [NLCD 2021](#)

**Great Lakes Shoreline and Dune Habitat\*:**

Condition regarding the availability of dune and shoreline habitat

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

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

Data Source: [ESRI Habitat Cost Surface](#)

**Intact Habitat Cores:** Large, unfragmented habitat patches & Areas of high landscape condition

Data Source: [ESRI Intact Habitat Cores](#), [PAD-US 4.0](#), [NLCD](#), [LANDFIRE EVT](#), & [Maus et al. 2022](#)

**Streams:** Stream condition regarding the risk of habitat degradation

Data Source: [NFHP Habitat Condition Index](#)

**Lakes:** Condition regarding the availability of lake habitat

Data Source: [LAGOS-US LOCUS](#) & [Lapierre et al. 2023](#)

**Wetlands:** Condition regarding the availability of wetland habitat

Data Source: [USFWS National Wetland Inventory](#)

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

Data Source: [EPA Estimated Floodplains Data](#)

*\*We will be expanding the Midwest Conservation Blueprint to the nearshore 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

Data Source: State Conservation Opportunity Areas

**Terrestrial Invasive Species:** Prevalence and impact of plant and animal invasives in terrestrial habitats

Data Source: *Currently N/A*

**Culturally Important Plants:** Prevalence and access to culturally important plants

Data Source: *Currently N/A*

**Imperiled Species (T&E):** Prevalence and population trend of species listed as threatened or endangered

Data Source: [NatureServe Imperiled Species Richness](#) & [USFWS Critical Habitat](#)

**Aquatic Invasive Species:** Prevalence of plant and animal invasives in aquatic habitats

Data Source: [USGS NAS Database](#)

**Game Species:** Prevalence and access to socially important game species

Data Source: *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

Data Source: [USFS Forests To Faucets 2.0](#)

**Sustainable Land-use Systems:** Ability to economically sustain human communities (e.g., ag, forestry, etc.) while also providing conservation benefits

Data Source: [National Conservation Easement Database](#)

**Natural Resource Economics:** Amount of Midwest economy that is derived from natural resources or associated activities

Data Source: *Currently N/A*

**Hazard & Disaster Risk:** Vulnerability of communities to impacts of hazards and other community-level stressors, which can include natural or human-caused disasters

Data Source: [CDC Social Vulnerability Index & Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool](#) & [American Forests Tree Equity Score](#)

**Nutrient Reduction:** Measure of nutrient loading that leads to hypoxia issues in downstream waters

Data Source: [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

Data Source: [PAD-US Public Access Lands](#) & [Open Street Map Paths and Trails](#)

**Tribal Nations Conservation Sovereignty:**

Ability of tribal nations to have access to, and control of, their natural and cultural resources

Data Source: [BIA Land Area Representations](#) & [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool](#)

**Potential Access to Recreation:** Accessibility gaps to green space and outdoor recreation in populated areas relative to demographic and environmental metrics

Data Source: [ParkServe Priority Areas](#)