



SAFE Species Program Handbook

Created by the
AZA Wildlife Conservation Committee
in Association with the
**AZA Conservation, Management, and Welfare Sciences
Department**

SAFE Species Program Handbook

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Mission

The mission of AZA's *SAFE: Saving Animals From Extinction* is to combine the power of zoo and aquarium visitors with the resources and collective expertise of AZA members and partners to save animals from extinction, with the vision that together we are saving the most vulnerable wildlife species from extinction and protecting them for future generations.

SAFE Species Program

The purpose of SAFE is to bring groups of AZA-accredited organizations (hereafter also known as AZA members) together with field-based partners to enhance the probability of conservation success for threatened species or a group of related taxa in the wild. SAFE species programs help AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums do more and better conservation. Stories from these programs help the public recognize and support the meaningful conservation done by AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums.

Specifically, SAFE species programs:

- Protect threatened animals in the wild
- Build on established recovery plans and track records of commitment
- Prioritize collaboration among AZA member institutions and field-based partners
- Implement both strategic conservation and public engagement activities
- Measure and report real conservation

One of the strategies of SAFE species programs is to follow the principles of the [One Plan Approach](#) and consider all populations of a species, across the spectrum from intensively managed to least managed (usually wild-living), in an integrated, stakeholder-inclusive, science-based process. SAFE species programs bring together multiple AZA members and field-based partners (Program Partners) to address the conservation needs of a threatened species or a group of related taxa in the wild. Each program builds upon the historic commitment of AZA members and others to implement aspects of existing recovery or action plan(s). AZA members working on a designated SAFE species assess the existing plan(s), and develop a program plan that identifies an array of conservation actions to be addressed by AZA members. The intention of the program plan is to prioritize actions by AZA members that complement and unify conservation efforts in the context of an existing recovery or conservation action plan. The group identifies a Program Leader who champions the efforts and will help coordinate, facilitate, and review progress toward program plan goals. Program Leaders and Program Partners serve the AZA community as experts on the conservation needs, challenges, and opportunities of the target species or taxa.

The programs work in partnership with AZA's Wildlife Conservation Committee (WCC), which oversees the overall SAFE species initiative. Program Partners include two or more AZA-accredited institutions or certified related facilities that have conducted or supported conservation work on the target species or group of related taxa for a minimum of two years and are committed to advancing an existing recovery or conservation plan. While the Program Leader must be an individual AZA member and work for an AZA-accredited facility, Program Partners do not need to be AZA members and may be comprised of a diverse membership of private entities, government agency representatives, other NGOs, universities, etc., as appropriate, for the program. In addition, each program may be complemented by Advisors, who serve as experts in various fields, and may be members of an associated AZA Committee or Scientific Advisory Group (SAG), or an external expert, such as a representative from an IUCN SSC Specialist Group. The program should strive to engage additional AZA members; ideally five or more within the cycle of the program plan.

SAFE species programs must adhere to AZA Board approved policies in all aspects of program management, and all AZA member institutions and programs must adhere to the [AZA Code of Professional Ethics](#).

Chapter 2. Program Functions

SAFE species programs have great independence to create a program structure and identify those unique activities that best advance the conservation of their targeted species or group of related taxa. Because AZA SAFE seeks both to increase conservation activity, as well as raise awareness about these efforts, Program Leaders are expected to develop the professional relationships necessary for program success and to work with their WCC Liaison and AZA staff to maximize communication about progress and obstacles. In order to reach these goals, several functions that are expected of all SAFE species programs are detailed below.

Partnerships

Partnerships are critical to species recovery and Program Leaders and Program Partners should form appropriate, professional partnerships with the purpose of conserving these species in the wild. The SAFE species program should include the primary stakeholders that will ultimately be responsible for long-term conservation success – both AZA members and beyond. Program Leaders are encouraged to communicate consistently with regional and international colleagues, and keep Program Partners, their WCC Liaison, and AZA staff informed about such discussions. AZA staff and the program's WCC Liaison are available to assist Program Leaders in developing these relationships, if necessary.

SAFE species programs should emphasize the importance of building trusting and cooperative relationships with local, community-based organizations or other non-profit organizations or agencies actively involved in the species' conservation. Special emphasis should be placed on building or expanding relationships with the entity responsible for authorizing implementation of the recovery plan.

When applicable and appropriate, the program should also collaborate with:

- AZA Animal Programs, such as Taxon Advisory Groups (TAGs) and Species Survival Plan® (SSP) programs, and take a One Plan Approach to conservation planning that incorporates both *in situ* and *ex situ* populations;
- IUCN/SSC staff and Specialist Groups as they strive toward conserving endangered animals;
- WAZA and other regional zoo and aquarium associations as they strive toward species conservation.

Program Partner Training

- Program Leaders should help new and existing Program Partner representatives become familiar and comfortable with their responsibilities with respect to advancing the program plan.
- AZA Professional Development programs are being identified and created to enhance the skills needed to lead and to participate in field conservation programs. SAFE partners will receive priority access to these programs.

Meetings and Workshops

WCC Meetings

The WCC will host a meeting for SAFE species Program Leaders at each AZA Annual Conference and Mid-Year Meeting. These meetings may include reporting and updates from the WCC and/or the AZA Conservation, Management, and Welfare Sciences (CMWS) Department, updates from SAFE species Program Leaders, an open question and answer session, and time for networking across SAFE species programs. Minutes from these meetings, and/or copies of presentations given, will be disseminated via the AZA Network SAFE: All Program Leaders community after the meeting.

SAFE Species Program Meetings and Workshops

- Program Leaders should hold, electronically or in person, regular, preferably at least annual, working meetings and/or workshops. Program Leaders are encouraged to hold in-person meetings and workshops in conjunction with the AZA Annual Conference and/or Mid-Year Meeting.

- Program-related meetings and workshops should be communicated to all Program Partners and their WCC Liaison, as well as the AZA CMWS Department (safe@aza.org).
- Program Leaders are encouraged to schedule and moderate open reporting sessions at the AZA Annual Conference and/or Mid-Year Meeting.
- All Program Partner representatives are encouraged to attend all official program meetings.
- Minutes should be recorded, AZA branded, archived, and included in the program's annual report.

Outputs

Each SAFE species program is responsible for developing and maintaining specific outputs including a program plan and an annual report. All program plans should be SAFE-branded, reviewed by members of AZA Board-level Committees, and content will be published on various AZA communications platforms, including the AZA website, *Connect* magazine, and social media, as appropriate. Annual reports will be made available to AZA by the SAFE species programs and contain material that is appropriate for internal and external communications.

SAFE Program Plans

A cornerstone of the SAFE species program is the development of a three-year program plan within twelve months of approval as a SAFE species program. The program plan will include measurable field conservation, public engagement, and funding objectives that will advance an established conservation or recovery plan (See [Chapter 3](#) for complete information on developing a program plan). Data related to these objectives should be included in a program summary table within the program plan, which should be updated annually and included in the program's annual report.

Program Annual Report (Due January 31)

(Also see Communications Section below)

Program Leaders are expected to submit an [annual report](#) for the previous year to their program's WCC Liaison and copying AZA's CMWS Department (safe@aza.org), by **January 31** of each year. Reports should generally cover the time period between February 1 of the previous year to January 30 of the current year; however, the timeline covered may be adjusted to reflect their program and meeting schedules. These reports update the WCC and AZA on the program's conservation, public engagement, communications, and funding progress in relation to the program plan, and facilitate the tracking of program meeting schedules. The reports also:

- Provide the Program Leader an opportunity to share program highlights and successes, and document and/or communicate any issues that may have arisen within the program, including confidentially, as appropriate. The updates may be communicated broadly and to external (public) audiences.
- Identify any additions or resignations of Program Partners.
- Allow an opportunity for the Program Leader to submit Statements of Institutional Support for new Program Partners and other materials to AZA on an annual basis.

Conservation Grants Fund Reviews

Participation in the AZA [Conservation Grants Fund](#) (CGF) annual review process provides all SAFE species programs with an opportunity for steering the conservation and science directives of the AZA community. Programs are encouraged to provide input to parties interested in submitting CGF proposals in order to strengthen links between the project and the SAFE species program's priorities. The Program Leader may be asked to provide first-tier reviews when relevant proposals are submitted.

Annual timing: CGF application materials become available in January, with funds available the following October. Requests for reviews will be sent to Program Leaders in April, with reviews due in late May.

Communications

Each program should facilitate communication among its partners, as well as develop a communication strategy to increase awareness of SAFE species program activities among appropriate audiences, such

as the general public, zoo and aquarium visitors, media, program stakeholders, research colleagues, etc. All AZA programs, including SAFE species programs, are expected to adhere to [AZA's Communications Guidelines](#).

The [SAFE Style Guide](#) includes guidelines for using the SAFE logo across various media platforms. Each facility should work with their own Public Relations departments or contact AZA's Public Relations Committee to maximize the effectiveness of their communications strategies. Other AZA members that hold the SAFE species or a closely related surrogate species may be a particularly important audience. If there is a relevant SSP, AZA members may download contact information for SSP Institutional Representatives from AZA's website. Program Leaders may contact AZA's CMWS Department to request contact information for the directors of those Institutional Representatives. Outreach to these members should encourage engagement with the SAFE program and may include a project-specific financial ask.

The program may distribute information among the AZA community via reporting sessions at AZA conferences and meetings, and/or through annual reports, or the AZA Network. While directors may share invitations to join a SAFE species program or program updates in the directors' community on the AZA Network, *they should not post project-specific fundraising appeals to that community*, unless it is an AZA-endorsed, community-wide campaign.

All public communications about the program should reference AZA and SAFE to enhance consistency and brand recognition, in addition to promoting the AZA member's role in the program or highlighting their staff or collaborations with other Program Partners. The SAFE Style Guide and the AZA CMWS Department (safe@aza.org) are available for branding and SAFE-related language assistance.

SAFE Species Focus Days

SAFE species programs should decide if and how a species "focus day" is part of their public awareness/ education and engagement strategy and include it in their approved program plan, as appropriate. If a focus day is part of the program plan, SAFE programs are responsible for leading the creation and dissemination of materials, and engaging AZA members and partners to participate. AZA staff will provide support for SAFE species focus day content, such as specific conservation contributions data, material review, and/or message amplification on social media, if requested, per the following time line:

- Six months ahead of the scheduled day:
 - Confirm that the species program will be organizing focus day efforts by emailing Sarah Gilsoul (SGilsoul@aza.org) with the day and date that will be celebrated and outlining their program's specific awareness and communications objectives. If the objectives are primarily focused on education and engagement, please email Kari Hart (KHart@aza.org). This timeframe will allow AZA to include the focus day in its communications calendar and connect the SAFE species program with additional expertise or resources to meet its goals.
- No less than two months in advance of the scheduled day:
 - Request any species data (field conservation contributions, SSP status and holding facilities, etc.) from AZA's CMWS Department (safe@aza.org).
 - Request any assistance with message or resource crafting/review or media support from Sarah and Kari.
- No less than one month in advance of the scheduled day:
 - Submit any requests for social media posts to be shared on the AZA accounts or tracking of social statistics to Sarah.

Note that AZA may develop messaging or resources for some focus days based on other strategic priorities. This may happen even if a SAFE species program has chosen not to engage on the designated day. If AZA is planning to promote a focus day related to a SAFE species, AZA will notify the SAFE Program Leader at least six months in advance, and AZA will coordinate efforts if the SAFE species program is also engaging on that particular focus day.

AZA Network

The AZA Network is an online, professional networking platform for people within the AZA zoo and aquarium community to share their ideas, best practices, and lessons learned. The platform allows for open professional interest groups or closed, private working groups. The profile section in the Network allows users to manage notifications of activity, so each member may decide whether to receive emails as activity occurs, or in a daily or weekly digest email. Program Leaders are automatically added to the AZA Network community called “SAFE: All Program Leaders”. The SAFE: All Program Leaders Network community is private and only includes SAFE Program Leaders, SAFE Vice Program Leaders, WCC Liaisons, and AZA staff; this community should be used to communicate important program updates and share resources for and among SAFE species programs. There is also the SAFE: Saving Animals From Extinction Network community, which is an open workspace that allows Program Leaders to post announcements, have discussions, and share resources with the wider AZA community.

SAFE Program Leaders are encouraged to establish and maintain an open or closed AZA Network community for their SAFE species programs to facilitate communication and discussion, along with document and resource sharing. To create a community within the AZA Network, Program Leaders should contact the AZA CMWS Department (safe@aza.org).

Social Media and *Connect* Articles

AZA utilizes SAFE species program stories as its conservation content across its multiple social media platforms. To maximize exposure of each program’s work, snippets of publicly appropriate information (including photos) should be provided for inclusion on AZA’s social media assets. Program Leaders should contact Sarah Gilsoul, AZA’s Communications Coordinator (SGilsoul@aza.org), to determine the best ways to share content. In addition, programs may wish to distribute information about their work in an article in *Connect*. To publish an article in *Connect* the Program Leader should contact Tim Lewthwaite, AZA’s Publications and Brand Director (tlewthwaite@aza.org). Content from annual reports may be published, with permission, to these assets.

Chapter 3. Proposing a Program

Create a New SAFE Species Program

AZA members wishing to create a SAFE species program should confirm that the species or group of related taxa meet the eligibility requirements, complete the proposal, and submit it to AZA's CMWS Department (safe@aza.org). Proposal materials are available in Microsoft Word format from AZA's website. The proposal should include a list of Program Partners, along with the contact information for the individual serving as the Program Partner Representative and a [Statement of Institutional Support](#) for AZA member organizations. The proposal should specify what existing conservation plan (e.g., recovery plan, biodiversity management plan, PHVA action plan) the program plan will complement and provide an overview of how AZA Animal Programs and/or individual AZA institutions have been supporting the target species' conservation. Proposals should be accompanied by Statements of Institutional Support from each listed AZA-accredited Program Partner.

Eligibility Criteria for SAFE Species

Each of the following criteria must be met in order to be eligible to become a SAFE species.

1. The species is threatened with extinction
 - Threatened (VU, or EN, or CR, or EW) according to IUCN's Red List; or
 - Equivalent threat level according to relevant government agencies (e.g., US or non-US federal/state/provincial); or
 - Listed as protected under CITES I or II; or
 - Demonstrates science-based evidence that the species population is under extreme distress and has not yet been listed under recognized threat levels.
2. The species has established conservation plan(s) (e.g., recovery plan, biodiversity management plan, PHVA action plan) in place. The SAFE species program can be either holistic or can be more targeted (e.g., regional, focused on one sub-species) as long as the program is clearly tied to a larger conservation plan.
3. Appropriate stakeholders (e.g., IUCN SSC Specialist Groups, USFWS recovery teams, range state wildlife offices, other NGOs, researchers focused on relevant taxa or issues) are identified and/or engaged.
4. Two or more AZA-accredited member facilities have an established commitment for conducting/supporting active conservation work on this species (as exemplified in AZA Accreditation Standard 3.2.1) for a minimum of two years.
5. If accepted as a SAFE species program, its members agree to:
 - Develop a three-year plan within twelve months for SAFE activities that includes measurable objectives, pertaining to areas such as communications, fundraising, and public/stakeholder engagement, that will advance the established conservation plan(s).
 - Increase member involvement in the conservation of the species to at least five AZA facilities.
 - Follow the SAFE species processes, protocols, and deadlines.

All AZA Program Leaders and Program Partners must adhere to AZA's Code of Professional Ethics.

Proposals are accepted on a rolling basis throughout the year. The Wildlife Conservation Committee (WCC) will approve or provide questions to the submitters within one month of receiving the proposal.

If questions arise during the review of the proposal, the WCC Vice Chair of SAFE will contact the submitter for resolution, identifying where additional information is needed and providing advice, as appropriate. Once the program is accepted, AZA's Conservation, Management, and Welfare Sciences

(CMWS) Department will send an official notification via email to the Program Leader(s). Public notification will be done via AZA's member magazine, *Connect*, at conference general sessions, on AZA's website, and over other AZA communication channels, as appropriate.

Proposal submission and approval dates are tracked by AZA's CMWS Department. AZA's CMWS Department will also maintain records of approval notifications and reviewer comments for proposals denied.

Amending Existing Program(s)

If an existing SAFE species program would like to request a program reconfiguration, the Program Leader(s) should provide a written explanation and justification for the change and address any affected program relationships, if applicable, to the WCC Liaison. The WCC Vice Chair of SAFE will then make a recommendation to the WCC Chair, who will approve or reject the recommendation. The WCC Vice Chair of SAFE will then inform the Program Leader(s) and AZA's CMWS Department of the decision.

Examples of program reconfigurations include: (1) combining two or more existing SAFE species programs, (2) expanding the existing SAFE species program to encompass a broader taxonomic scope or (3) narrowing to a particular species instead of a broader taxonomic group.

Chapter 4. The Cornerstone: Program Plans

Overview

Working with Program Partners, Program Leaders are responsible for drafting and submitting three-year program plans within twelve months of acceptance of the SAFE species program. The primary goal of a program plan is to articulate and guide how the AZA community will advance an established conservation plan (e.g., recovery plan, biodiversity management plan, PHVA action plan). Since the SAFE program plan is linked to a published recovery plan, Program Partners that use it to guide their conservation actions may be confident that those activities are considered essential in the recovery of the species and will be valued by stakeholders. This connection and subsequent reporting increases awareness of, and transparency around, the program's efforts.

The program plan will identify a medium- or long-term (e.g., 10-year) vision and a goal for the duration of the program plan. The plan's goal should describe the appropriate effect of actions that would be needed to achieve the program's vision. The plan will also include specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented, and time-bound (SMART) objectives (i.e., formal statements of the outcomes or results necessary to attain the goal) and related actions.

Program plans should articulate its conservation targets (also defined in the [Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation](#) as biodiversity targets; the specific, tangible entities the project seeks to conserve) and the threats, challenges, and/or pressures contributing to the species' decline. The connection between the inputs available to AZA members, the proposed actions, the anticipated change resulting from those actions (i.e., outputs, metrics), the expected objectives accomplished because of those outcomes, and the intended effect (i.e., impact or goal) of the program on the threats and/or targets should be clear.

The program plan should provide AZA member institutions with guidance for how to become involved in its implementation. All information and details included in the plan should be sufficiently clear for colleagues not familiar with the species' or taxon group's conservation status and their needs to understand how and why these related inputs, actions, and objectives are being recommended.

SAFE species programs implement existing recovery plans and build on the histories of engagement that AZA members have dedicated for the target species' or taxa's conservation. The program plan should also incorporate background information, some of which will have been included in the proposal for becoming a SAFE species, regarding: 1) the *ex situ* population within the AZA community, 2) existing conservation and research activities by AZA members and of other regional zoological associations, as appropriate, 3) the current *in situ* population status from the global IUCN Red List assessment to facilitate conservation planning across *in situ* and *ex situ* populations (i.e., the One Plan Approach)¹, and 4) the citation for the recovery or conservation action plan being advanced by the SAFE species program.

Program Plan Development Timeline

Month	Step	Description
1	Begin	Previous plan ends or new program is approved and collaborative development of new program plan begins
2-6	Review for input	Share draft logic model or outline of priority objectives with

¹ If an IUCN global assessment is out of date, the species has not been assessed, or the SAFE species program is focused on a population at a local or national, rather than global, scale, then relevant information with data from national assessments, or relevant IUCN/SSC Species or Conservation Planning Specialist Group documents should be provided.

		WCC Liaison and other committee reviewers to inform continued development
2-12	Collaboration	Ongoing collaboration with SAFE program members and WCC Liaison to develop program plan
12	Submit	Submit to WCC Vice Chair of SAFE and AZA office
12-14	Review	Review by relevant AZA Board-level committees
14-15	Finalize	Respond to areas of concern, edit final copy
-	Publish!	Program plan posted on AZA website and announced across AZA Network

After the completion of its inaugural three-year program plan, a SAFE species program may choose to draft either another three-year plan, or elect to create a five-year program plan. A five-year program plan provides the SAFE species program an extended time frame in which to set and accomplish lengthier conservation objectives, as well as sufficient time to evaluate and assess the program's outcomes. However, any SAFE species program that wishes to develop a five-year program plan must first consult with its WCC Liaison, who will then submit the program's request to the WCC Vice Chair of SAFE and AZA's Conservation Coordinator.

Integrate People and Stakeholders into Solutions

The program plan should identify action opportunities appropriate for involvement by an array of AZA members of various means, with the intent of engaging at least five AZA member organizations in the implementation of the program plan. Funding expectations of Program Partners should be clearly articulated. AZA suggests that Program Partner participation be valued at a minimum of \$1500 per year in direct financial and/or in-kind support, but specific expectations for meaningful participation should be defined by each program, as appropriate for their program plan and species' needs.

AZA SAFE is multi-disciplinary and each program should integrate expertise from across the AZA membership; thus, programs are encouraged to include science, conservation, and animal care and management experts, as well as professionals from education, communications, professional development, fundraising, government affairs, etc., as appropriate. SAFE species programs should enlist the community's considerable social assets (including community trust, connection to visitors and digital audiences, and education and engagement portfolios) to develop solutions that benefit the conservation target(s). Program plans should incorporate activities that allow meaningful contribution to the recovery efforts by diverse stakeholders, including:

- Internal audiences, such as colleagues across departments, vendors, governing authorities, volunteers, and donors
- Guests and online supporters
- Communities neighboring their facility
- People in or near the communities living with or within the range of the conservation target(s).

For example, the SAFE species program may involve colleagues and other departments to raise the profile of and support for the work, activating donors or other funding to resource program activities. People in the conservation target's range may serve as advisors or on the steering committee and identify activities that could mitigate a threat or help people and wildlife thrive together and reach the established recovery plan's goals.

Guidance and Resources for Developing Program Plans

Approximately 2-3 months into the development of their program plan, Program Leaders should circulate a draft logic model, or similar outline, mapping the logic chain from inputs through impact for their primary objectives. This model may identify gaps and opportunities to engage and activate additional, diverse resources from across the AZA community. The model should be shared with the program’s WCC Liaison, who can circulate it to representatives of other AZA Board-level committees (e.g., CEC, Public Relations) for initial feedback before significant development and writing of the plan has been completed, if requested. The Program Leader and reviewing committee representatives may choose to have a conversation to talk through the proposed plan. A modified version of the logic model may be included in the final program plan in lieu of the program summary table. A logic model worksheet that may be useful to SAFE species programs as they develop individual objectives is available in [Appendix B](#).

Both goals and objectives should be SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Results-oriented, and Time-limited.

Specific	Identify the actions or tasks that will take place, enhancing transparency and consistent understanding among partners.
Measurable	Measurable against a scale (e.g., numbers, all/nothing states) to allow progress towards completion of an objective to be monitored.
Achievable	Practical and attainable given available resources.
Results-oriented	Focused on the necessary changes or expected results on the conservation target or threat.
Time-limited	Identify the length of time in which it will be accomplished.

Various resources are available to assist Program Leaders and their programs.

- The program’s WCC Liaison should work closely with the Program Leader to provide guidance throughout the program plan process, helping assure that the Program Leader, Steering Committee and/or Program Partners are addressing each element of the checklist, while also providing general advice as the program develops its program plan.
- AZA’s Conservation and Research database, available on the AZA website, is a valuable resource when compiling information about conservation activities undertaken by AZA members. Program Leaders are encouraged to contact AZA’s CMWS Department with specific data requests (safe@aza.org).
- Program Leaders are encouraged to communicate with, and integrate the expertise of, AZA Board-level committees (e.g., Conservation Education, Public Relations, Advancement, Government Affairs) to develop subject matter-relevant SMART objectives and so that the committees may help the program meet its vision and goal.
- Program Leaders may consider reaching out to other AZA membership groups, such as Conservation Partners and Commercial Members, to engage with them in meaningful ways that extend beyond donations and fundraising (i.e. advising on development and achievement of objectives, as appropriate).
- Program Leaders and Steering Committee members should engage colleagues with relevant expertise from their own organizations in the development and implementation of program plans. Organizations commit their institutional support for Program Leader and Officer service and may make success an organization-wide priority.

Required Elements of a Program Plan

The following elements are required in the program plan and will be evaluated by committee reviewers (see [checklist](#)). Program Leaders may be creative in their presentation of the information within this basic format, but the program plan must address each element completely (see [Appendix C](#) for a draft outline with required elements). All elements should be referenced in a [Table of Contents](#), each page of the document should be numbered, and a [Program Summary Table](#) must be included. The document should be copy edited prior to final publication for consistency, typos, etc. Many of the components to be included in the program plans have been identified by the [Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation](#), developed by the Conservation Measures Partnership. For more information about the definition of terms or examples, refer to the [Open Standards](#).

Conservation Target

Specify the species or taxonomic group the program will work to conserve through implementation of the program plan. References may be included.

- The program may specify their taxon at a higher taxonomic level (e.g., Order, Family, Genus), but should still summarize the taxonomic grouping and identify the portion of the taxa targeted.
- The program may specify their taxon at lower taxonomic levels (e.g., subspecies, Distinct Population Segment) as long as it meets the criteria of being threatened with extinction required for SAFE species eligibility.

Conservation Status of Taxa

- Identify both the federal listing status and the [International Union for Conservation of Nature \(IUCN\) status](#) for each species. If an U.S. ESA or IUCN assessment is out of date, the species has not been assessed, or the SAFE species program is focused on a population at a local (rather than national or global) scale, information with data from national assessments or relevant IUCN/SSC Taxonomic or Conservation Planning Specialist Group documents should be provided.
- Include a short paragraph summarizing the conservation status of the taxon in the wild, as appropriate.

Recovery Plan

- Cite the established recovery plan that the program plan will advance. Describe why the particular plan was selected to guide the development of the SAFE program plan, recognizing that multiple recovery or management plans may be available for the program's conservation target.
- Describe the primary threats, challenges, and/or pressures impacting the species' population(s), as described in the cited recovery plan. Include both direct and indirect threats, challenges, and/or pressures to provide the context and the forces impacting the conservation target.
- Describe the relationship with the entity responsible for authorizing implementation of the recovery plan (e.g., program partners' membership on a US Fish and Wildlife Service Recovery or IUCN/SSC Species Specialist Group). Letters of support from the authorizing entity may be included as an Appendix.
- Specify the sections of the recovery plan that the program plan will advance through its actions.

SAFE Species Program Vision and Plan Goal

- Identify a medium- or long-term vision that describes a desired state or status you are working to achieve for the conservation target. The timeframe for achieving this vision should be explicit, and while recommended to be 10 years, may be as long as 50 years.
- Identify a SMART three-year goal for the program plan, or five-year goal for subsequent program plans, that articulates the impacts that the program intends to have and that would be necessary progress for achieving the longer-term vision.

Program Operational Structure

- Identify the Program Leader, Steering Committee, Program Partners, Advisors, Field Partners, etc., and their contact information, including employer, position title, email address, and phone number.

- Describe why these specific Field Partners and Advisors (e.g., skillsets, expertise, community representatives) were selected to help execute the program plan and their engagement in the development of the SAFE program plan.

Objectives

Objectives are formal statements of the outcomes or intermediate results (e.g., expanded conservation breeding program, research questions answered) and desired changes (e.g., reduction in threat) believed necessary to attain the program's action plan goal. Objectives specify the desired changes in the factors (direct and indirect threats and opportunities) that are feasible to achieve in the short and medium-term (Conservation Measures Partnership, 2013), i.e. within the period of the program plan. SMART objectives should:

- Meet the criteria of being specific, measurable, achievable, results-oriented, and time-bound.
- Describe what the program plan seeks to achieve as a result of its actions.
- Be accompanied by metrics (i.e. indicators or outputs) that will monitor progress toward the goal.
- Include an approximate timeframe for completion.
- Be connected to specific sections of the recovery plan being implemented.

Objectives should be developed for each outcome necessary for the SAFE species program to meet its three-year or five-year goal. Success with respect to the conservation target will likely require meeting objectives that engage various stakeholders, increase awareness or support for the program, and include financial resources.

Actions

Actions (i.e. activities, tasks, or strategies) necessary to achieve each objective should be identified. Actions should be aligned with their corresponding objective in the program summary table. Program plans should identify:

- The stakeholder(s) or partners enlisted in executing the activity including, as appropriate:
 - Program or Field Partners
 - Internal audiences (e.g., organizational departments, vendors, governing authorities, volunteers, donors)
 - Visitors and online supporters
 - Communities neighboring AZA member facility
 - People in or near the communities living with or within the range of the conservation targets.
- Budgetary or other resources necessary for activities to be undertaken, and whether those resources have already been obtained.
- An ordering or timeline for sequential activities.
- Associated metrics (i.e. indicators or outputs) to measure the change due to the actions and progress toward meeting the objectives.

The actions and metrics used for achieving and measuring progress toward these objectives should be included in a program summary table. This table should be updated annually with the appropriate data to track progress and should be included in the program's annual report.

Recommended Program Plan Reviewers

Consider the suite of activities within your program plan and identify 2-3 different AZA subject matter expert committees or groups that may be able to assist the program in fulfilling its objectives and reaching its goal and would be appropriate to review your program plan. AZA Board-level committees include:

Animal Health	Government Affairs	Public Relations
Animal Population Management	Human Resources	Research and Technology
Animal Welfare	Marketing	Volunteer Management
Conservation Education	Professional Development	Wildlife Conservation
Diversity		

Other (Committee, Taxon or Scientific Advisory Group, SSP program, etc.)

Building on AZA Community Commitments

This section describes how the program plan builds upon the AZA community's history of engagement on behalf of the conservation target. The following three sections are anticipated at 1-3 pages in all. Any additional background information should be included as an Appendix (optional).

- Status of Taxon within the AZA Community
 - Briefly relate the significance of this species to AZA institutions.
 - Summarize the status of the *ex situ* population within the AZA community, including whether the species is under the management purview of a Taxonomic Advisory Group (TAG) or Species Survival Plan® (SSP).
- AZA Conservation Activities
 - If this program plan is subsequent to the publication of a previous SAFE program plan, summarize the actions and progress that occurred under the earlier program plan(s) toward that plan's vision and goal.
 - If the species is under the purview of an AZA Animal Program (i.e., a TAG or SSP), describe the Animal Program's engagement in the species' conservation and how/whether those activities relate to the SAFE program plan.
 - Summarize the history and relevance of conservation support and engagement by individual member organizations of the AZA community prior to the establishment of the SAFE species program (available in AZA's [Conservation and Research database](#), or Program Leaders may also contact AZA's CMWS Department for specific data requests at: safe@aza.org). Summaries of individual member organizations should be limited to a maximum of 1-2 paragraphs per organization. Additional organization-specific information may be included in an Appendix (optional).
- AZA Public Awareness Activities
 - If this is not the first published program plan for the SAFE species, summarize the actions and progress that occurred under the earlier program plan(s) toward that plan's vision and goal.
 - Summarize the history and relevance of public awareness activities related to this species by individual member organizations of the AZA community prior to the establishment of the SAFE species program.

Program Plan Submission and Review

The program plan will be AZA SAFE branded. Staff in the AZA Conservation, Management, and Welfare Sciences Department is available to assist with document branding, if needed.

Program plans should be submitted by the Program Leader to the AZA Conservation Coordinator and copied to their WCC Liaison within twelve months of the SAFE species program approval. If this program plan is subsequent to the original plan, it should be submitted to the AZA Conservation Coordinator and copied to their WCC Liaison within six months of the conclusion of the term of the previous program plan. The AZA Conservation Coordinator will confirm receipt of the plan and notify the AZA CMWS Department, as well as inform the WCC Liaison of next steps.

Program Plan Review Checklist

The Program Leader and WCC Liaison should use the [Program Plan Review Checklist](#) to confirm inclusion of all required program plan elements. Committee reviewers will confirm that each element of this checklist has been satisfied appropriately as they assess the program plan for acceptance.

Committee Review of Program Plans

The WCC Liaison will coordinate the review process among AZA committees. The reviewing committees will be comprised of those identified within the program plan. The WCC Liaison may suggest other board-level committees that should be involved in the review process and will inform AZA staff if and which additional committees should review the program plan, as appropriate. The most common reviewing committees are those for Wildlife Conservation, Conservation Education, Marketing, and Public Relations.

The AZA Conservation Coordinator will provide the WCC Liaison with a point of contact for each committee. The WCC Liaison will use this list to send each committee a copy of the SAFE program plan and [Review Checklist](#).

Each committee point of contact should send the program plan to selected reviewers and compile and submit all feedback, including each reviewer's approval recommendation, to the WCC Liaison within 4-6 weeks after receiving the plan. The WCC Liaison will compile committees' feedback, converse with committee representatives, and make a final recommendation based on reviewers' input that the Program Plan be "Approved", "Approved Pending Required Revisions", or "Not Approved". The WCC Liaison will send that recommendation to the WCC Vice Chair of SAFE and copy the AZA Conservation Coordinator. The WCC Vice Chair of SAFE will send that recommendation to the WCC Chair for final approval.

Approved Program Plans

Upon approval, the WCC Liaison will send an official notification to the SAFE species Program Leader, copying the WCC Vice Chair of SAFE and the AZA Conservation, Management, and Welfare Sciences Department (safe@aza.org). The SAFE species program should incorporate additional edits or comments from the reviewing committees within two weeks. Upon completion, the Program Leader will send the final PDF of the Program Plan to the AZA Conservation Coordinator for publication on AZA's website. Public notification will be done via the AZA Network and other appropriate AZA communication channels.

Program Plans Approved Pending Required Revisions

When the program plan meets all required criteria outline in the Checklist for Program Plan Review, but more information or edits are needed prior to program plan acceptance, the program's WCC Liaison will notify the Program Leader, WCC Vice Chair of SAFE, and AZA's CMWS Department and provide the Program Leader with a summary of comments from reviewers. The WCC Liaison will identify additional information needed, provide advice, and work with the Program Leader towards ultimate acceptance and publication. Revised program plans will be reviewed by the WCC Liaison and the WCC Vice Chair of SAFE. The program plan does not need to undergo a second full review. Once approved, the process for finalization, publication, and announcements will be the same as described above in the "Approved Program Plans" section.

Program Plans Not Approved

In cases where several criteria of the program plan checklist have not been met, a program plan may not be approved. In this case, the program's WCC Liaison will provide the Program Leader, the WCC Vice Chair of SAFE, and AZA's CMWS Department with a summary of comments from reviewers. The WCC Liaison will identify additional information needed, provide advice, and work with the Program Leader towards ultimate acceptance and publication. Revised program plans should be submitted within two months of receiving requested revisions, and resubmitted for another full review process.

Program plan submission, approval, and publication dates are tracked by AZA's CMWS Department, who will also maintain records of approval notifications and of reviewer comments for program plans.

Additional Considerations and Processes

Program Plan Extension Requests

In order to keep SAFE species program information current and progressing, Program Leaders are accountable for submitting a program plan to the WCC for review and approval upon completion of each new program plan. Requests for extensions in completing the program plan should be included in the program's annual report, when possible. Failure to meet deadlines will give the WCC cause to consider removal and replacement of the Program Leader or removal of status as a SAFE species program.

If there are challenges with meeting the program plan submission deadline:

- The Program Leader may request an extension prior to the deadline by contacting the WCC Liaison to discuss the reason for the extension request and to request a new due date.
- The WCC Liaison will consider the request, and if the extension is deemed warranted, a new program plan deadline will be set. Examples of circumstances that may precipitate an extension

include an unanticipated delay in USFWS species recovery plan development, the need to involve a new stakeholder in the planning process, or the need to further revise a draft program plan in order to incorporate emerging environmental or human dimensions elements.

- The WCC Liaison will notify the AZA Conservation Coordinator and the WCC Vice Chair of SAFE of the outcome of the extension request.

Program Plan Revisions

The program plan is a living document, and projects may be added or amended over the course of plan implementation. It is important to keep SAFE species program information current on AZA's website so that members may learn about programs and become involved. Therefore, if significant revisions have been made, the updated program plan should be submitted to the program's WCC Liaison and copied to AZA's Conservation, Management, and Welfare Sciences Department (safe@aza.org).

Review upon Completion of Program Plan

As the end of a program plan approaches and development of a successive program plan begins, a review of the active plan and its implementation shall be conducted. In the annual report of the final year of the program plan, SAFE species Program Leaders should summarize key accomplishments and state whether or not objectives were met.

SAFE species programs shall discuss their accomplishments and challenges with members of the WCC.

- The discussion may be held over video conference or in-person.
- Participants will include 1-3 members of the SAFE species program's steering committee, the WCC Liaison, and one additional member of the WCC. If the WCC Liaison also holds a Steering Committee position, another Steering Committee member must be appointed for the process.
- Members of the WCC should review the program's Annual Reports in advance of the meeting.
- Members of the SAFE species program should be prepared to:
 - Describe progress toward objectives included in the program plan's summary table(s);
 - Share major accomplishments; and
 - Discuss any difficulties encountered in accomplishing objectives and how those were addressed.
- WCC members should ask the SAFE species program if and how the Committee could better support their program moving forward.

Successive Program Plans

- SAFE species programs with accepted inaugural plans will be up for review three years from when acceptance notification of the first program plan was sent. Successive program plans will be up for review either three years or five years following notification of the previous plan's acceptance.
- The SAFE species program is expected to submit a new program plan for review and acceptance in a timely manner following the completion of the previous plan.
- After the completion of its inaugural three-year program plan, a SAFE species program may choose to draft either another three-year program plan, or elect to create a five-year program plan.
- Subsequent program plans should build on progress and learnings from previous program plan(s). A summary of the actions and progress that occurred under the earlier program plan(s) toward the most recent plan's vision and goal should be included in the AZA Conservation and Stakeholder Activities section of the program plan.

Chapter 5. SAFE Programs Using Managed *Ex Situ* Populations for Recovery Programs

Introduction and Background

One of the strategies of SAFE species programs is to follow the principles of the [One Plan Approach](#) and consider all populations of a species across a spectrum from intensively managed to least managed (usually wild-living), in an integrated, stakeholder-inclusive, science-based process. Application of these principles may identify strategies that utilize *ex situ* population management for species recovery. Scientific advising from AZA's two scientific Centers, the AZA Population Management Center (PMC) at Lincoln Park Zoo and the AZA Reproductive Management Center (RMC) at St. Louis Zoo, helps AZA programs manage *ex situ* populations to maintain genetic and demographic health, while meeting program goals. Since their establishments, these Centers have advised AZA's Species Survival Plan (SSP) programs.

In July 2021, AZA's Board of Directors approved recommendations by the AZA Animal Population Management (APM) Committee that 1) externally managed programs² would no longer be eligible to be SSPs, and 2) AZA-branded programs, including SAFE species programs, could have access to AZA Center services.

Processes defining which SAFE species programs would be eligible for AZA Center services were developed through an iterative process by a Wildlife Conservation Committee (WCC) working group comprised of WCC members, an APM Committee liaison, and AZA staff, and were approved by AZA's Board of Directors in 2022. These processes affirm that:

- Externally managed programs with a recovery element have the option to become SAFE species programs.
- PMC/RMC services will be available free of charge to SAFE species programs in which *ex situ* breeding is a key recovery strategy.
- These SAFE species programs can opt in for PMC/RMC services; they have the option to use other, non-PMC/RMC advisors as desired.
- These SAFE species programs use *ex situ* breeding as a recovery strategy; there is no additional nomenclature distinguishing them from other SAFE species programs.

Processes related to population management and administration for these SAFE species programs were developed, also through an iterative process, by a working group comprised of members of the WCC, APM Committee, the PMC, and AZA staff, and were approved by the Board in 2024. Guiding principles followed were to:

- Retain familiarity with processes previously used by these programs (i.e., as SSP programs)
- Embrace differences and flexibility, where appropriate
- Be mindful of communications of APM Committee to minimize confusion

Specific areas of flexibility were deemed necessary to meet recovery program goals including to: 1) release cooperatively managed AZA programs from requirements that do not fit well with non-AZA partners and external management authorities, and 2) adjust care and welfare practices to prepare animals for successful release into the wild, as necessary and in compliance with AZA's numerous policies that ensure the highest standards of care and welfare for animals, including the AZA Code of Professional Ethics, the AZA Policy on Responsible Population Management, and organizational policies.

² The AZA Board-approved (July 2021) definition for externally managed programs is: "Any cooperatively managed program where final authority of breeding, transfers, husbandry, or reintroductions of animals managed in AZA facilities falls to an external entity."

See the [Summary Table of Key Differences Between SSP and SAFE Population Management](#) for a comparative list of alternative approaches taken for these two AZA programs.

Program Eligibility for AZA Center Services

The focus of SAFE is saving animals and habitats in the wild, which is aligned with the goals of programs that use *ex situ* breeding for reintroduction into the wild as a recovery strategy. Scientific advising from AZA Centers is often critical to *ex situ* population management for *in situ* recovery. Any program interested in obtaining AZA Center services must meet the eligibility criteria for SAFE species (<https://www.aza.org/propose-safe-species>) including (briefly):

1. The species is threatened with extinction.
2. The species has established conservation plan(s) (e.g., recovery plan, biodiversity management plan, PHVA action plan) in place.
3. Appropriate stakeholders are identified/engaged.
4. Two or more AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums have an established commitment for active conservation work on the species for a minimum of two years.³

Additionally,

5. PMC/RMC services will be available to SAFE species programs where **population management of an *ex situ* population** is critical to *in situ* conservation and recovery and **where *ex situ* conservation is explicitly called for in the conservation plan or by the relevant government authority**.

Successful recovery programs take many different approaches, so a suite of program types was identified that would either automatically receive AZA Center services, if requested, (Group 1), or that would be evaluated before access to services was granted (Groups 2 and 3):

- **Group 1:** AZA and partner facilities are the direct source of the animals being released, either because AZA animals are being reintroduced, or are regularly or recently transferred to a partner facility for breeding and their descendants are reintroduced.
- **Group 2:** A partner facility holds the source population for releases and animals are not regularly transferred in/out of AZA facilities; however, AZA Center services is one way the SAFE species program supports *in situ* conservation.
- **Group 3:** Animals are an assurance population without any current releases but where future releases are being planned, or other special cases where scientifically rigorous population management of an *ex situ* population is arguably essential to *in situ* conservation.

For multi-species (taxonomic-based) SAFE species programs, only populations that fit the above definitions would have access to AZA Center services, not all species covered by the SAFE species program.

For populations in which only a portion of the population is a source for releases, AZA Center services would be applied to the entire population (i.e., planning would include all holding facilities), to ensure that the entire *ex situ* population is well managed in case it is needed for future recovery efforts.

Participation is required by all facilities that house animals included in the scope of the managed population. All AZA facilities housing animals of the relevant taxa must participate in population planning-related activities (i.e., provide studbook updates when requested, respond to wants/needs surveys, etc.). These facilities must also identify an institutional representative (IR) for population management purposes, and a SAFE program partner representative (PPR) to the SAFE species program (this may be the same, or a different, person). All AZA facilities housing animals of the relevant taxa are partners to the

³ *Ex situ* breeding in support of release meets the criteria of active conservation work with the species.

SAFE species program; it is the SAFE species program status (i.e., an AZA-branded program) that affords access to AZA Center services for these populations. All non-AZA facilities housing animals within the defined scope of the managed population should participate in all population planning-related activities and identify an IR to make sure their needs and wants are fully considered in the planning process.

Decisions that define or limit the scope of a studbook or managed population must be made in consultation with, and with approval by, the WCC, PMC advisor, SAFE program leader, population coordinator, and studbook keeper.

Termination and Reinstatement of Services

The WCC reserves the option to re-evaluate access to AZA Center services, in collaboration with the program, if:

- The program stops actively releasing animals or if plans for a future release become stalled indefinitely.
- A program's planning meeting with the PMC is rescheduled or cancelled twice or an ongoing lack of preparedness by the program affects the ability of the PMC or RMC to provide high quality services.

This evaluation could result in termination of service and the WCC vice chair of SAFE will help the WCC stay apprised of the reasons for services being discontinued.

In the case of rescheduled or cancelled planning meetings, the PMC will be asked to advise on which party was responsible (i.e., studbook keeper or population coordinator) and the WCC may determine that continued access to AZA Center services is contingent upon that party vacating the position. If not removed from the role, AZA services may be halted. Ultimately, and with understanding of the implications of their decision on the program's ability to access AZA Center services, the SAFE program leader and steering committee will determine whether a person should be removed from their role.

The WCC will consider reinstatement of services on a case-by-case basis, in collaboration with the PMC, focusing on whether the reasons why services were originally discontinued (e.g., deadline accountability, communications) have been addressed.

PMC and RMC Services

SAFE species programs that meet the eligibility described above can request PMC and/or RMC services.

PMC4 core services provided

- Studbook support: Advice on data entry and conventions, studbook validation, administration within ZIMS, and software trouble-shooting.
- Analysis and creation of breeding and transfer plans: This analysis may include "full" plans or interim assistance designed to help plan breeding, transfers, or releases to the wild – the extent of the meeting and the level of documentation can be customized to meet the needs of the PMC and SAFE species program.
- Frequency of PMC services will be mutually agreed upon between the program and PMC based on biology and the requirements of the recovery program.

Analyses not part of core PMC services

PMC may be involved or provide additional support on a case-by-case basis, depending on their schedule, time constraints, and skillsets:

⁴ This includes the AZA Population Management Center (PMC) at Lincoln Park Zoo and the AZA PMC Adjunct advisors who work at various AZA facilities.

- Involvement in more in-depth population biology-related research.
- Development of Population Habitat Viability Analysis (PHVA) or Population Viability Analyses (PVAs).
- Provision of data to other's PVA/PHVA processes.
- Provision of data for recovery plans.

RMC services provided

The RMC manages a contraceptive database for data on contraceptive use, dosage, efficacy, reversibility, safety, and side-effects so that the RMC can provide data-driven contraceptive recommendations. Input of data into the contraceptive database is strongly encouraged in all cases and is required when certain contraceptives are obtained from the RMC. Data are entered by designated individuals at holding facilities and not the population coordinator/studbook keeper. The RMC also offers:

- Reproductive management consulting and recommendations publicly available to all.
- Contraceptives for any SAFE species programs that receive PMC breeding and transfer plans for animals maintained in human care.

Proposal Process

Interested programs or populations that do not already have a related SAFE species program should submit a [Request for AZA Center Services](#) form as an attachment to their SAFE species program proposal. SAFE proposals will be reviewed and approved before the program's request is reviewed for AZA Center service eligibility.

For existing SAFE or managed *ex situ* programs (e.g., historic SSP programs or AZA regional studbooks), the SAFE program leader or a designee (e.g., elected studbook keeper) submits a [Request for AZA Center Services](#) form to AZA. If the person that submits the request is not the program leader, the relevant SAFE program leader must be copied.

Populations already within the SAFE process (proposal submitted, proposal approved and program plan in progress, or program plan approved) should submit their request as soon as they determine that an *ex situ* managed population will be a priority recovery strategy and that they would like to receive AZA Center services. Once the request has been approved, the program should consult with their WCC liaison about whether to incorporate *ex situ* management objectives as an addendum or update to their current plan or into any program plan in development.

The WCC and APM Committee will review and approve the creation of new studbooks for *ex situ* populations for purposes of *in situ* recovery through review of a submitted SAFE proposal (if not yet a SAFE species program) and a [Request for AZA Center Services](#).

Review of Requests for AZA Center Services

While the review of SAFE species program proposals and SAFE program administration is conducted by the WCC, *Requests for Center Services* are reviewed by members of both AZA committees whose programs benefit from the services provided by AZA's Population and Reproductive Management Centers.

Review group composition

- Three members from WCC: a WCC member with *ex situ* population management experience, who 1) serves as the primary contact person for any questions about the process, 2) receives *Requests for Center Services*, and 3) facilitates the review process; the vice chair of SAFE; and one at large WCC member. If the vice chair of SAFE is also the primary contact, an additional WCC member who has experience with recovery programs using *ex situ* population management and/or population management or planning will be added.

- Three members from APM Committee: the APM liaison to the WCC; the TAG liaison most closely associated with the species applying; the vice chair for SSP programs.
- Advisors, including: AZA staff liaisons for both WCC and APM Committee, the Director of the PMC, and the Director of the RMC.

Review process

1. The interested program submits a [Request for AZA Center Services](#) form to safe@aza.org, copying the relevant SAFE program leader if the population is already a SAFE program, to ensure all parties are aware of the request.
2. The WCC point person conducts a preliminary review and may ask clarifying questions or invite minor revisions to strengthen the request.
3. The WCC point person brings the request to the review group for discussion with a summary of its strengths and weaknesses and may make a draft recommendation, if desired.
 - a. Group 1 species are forwarded for informational and awareness purposes.
 - b. Groups 2/3 species require discussion by the review group, either via email or meeting.
4. The WCC point person communicates the final decision on the request to the program, copying the WCC vice chair of SAFE, AZA's CMWS department (safe@aza.org), the PMC, and the RMC.

Group 1 species will receive a response within two weeks; responses for groups 2 and 3 species should be received within one month of submission.

Review criteria

Review of group 2 and 3 species includes consideration of the:

1. Evidence that the AZA population is directly tied to future *in situ* recovery (i.e., assurance populations with defined and specific reintroduction plans); evidence that the reintroduction plans are likely to be implemented; evidence that progress is being made towards plan for releases.
2. Evidence that field or government partners with the authority to release animals are supportive of the *ex situ* management and release strategies.
3. Whether transfers/releases are frequent/repeated and recent rather than an occasional or historic transfer of animals or genes.
4. Whether an AZA population serves other *ex situ* roles besides direct release/recovery, and whether rigorous scientific population management is needed for the AZA population to serve those roles (i.e., AZA services may not be authorized if a SAFE species may benefit recovery through research on an *ex situ* population, but population management isn't required to serve that role, such as to test treatment efficacy, field equipment such as tracking/monitoring technology, etc.), or whether a more informally managed program would be sufficient.
5. The expected conservation value and impact of the *ex situ* population on *in situ* recovery.

Program and Committee Roles

For SAFE species programs using this conservation strategy and AZA Center services, the studbooks are overseen by the SAFE species program, AZA, and WCC, in consultation with any external (i.e., non-AZA) management authorities. SAFE programs are encouraged to have studbook keepers and population coordinators serve on the program's steering committee.

Wildlife Conservation Committee

- Committee membership should include one or more people with explicit experience with *ex situ* populations used in recovery programs.
- One committee member with *ex situ* population experience will be designated as the point person to receive *Requests for Center Services* and facilitate the migration of externally managed, recovery focused SSPs or studbooks into SAFE. This role was fulfilled by a transition coordinator

from 2022-2024 and the responsibilities will fall to the WCC vice chair of SAFE, if another member is not designated.

- The PMC director or a delegated proxy will be added to the WCC as an advisor.

Taxon Advisory Groups (TAGs)

All SAFE species programs are encouraged to collaborate as appropriate or desired with other management structures related to their species (e.g., SSPs, TAGs, Advisors).

Programs that formerly were an SSP or include significant *ex situ* populations may already have strong connections and are encouraged to maintain those through one or more of the following:

- Include a TAG member on the SAFE steering committee, and vice versa
- Discuss the SAFE proposal process and program plan with the TAG
- Include a SAFE report during TAG conference sessions or other meetings
- Share the SAFE species program's annual report submitted to AZA with the TAG chair

TAGs are required to list SAFE species programs within their Regional Collection Plans (RCPs) in the Animal Programs Summary Table. They may include SAFE species programs in the Species Capacity & Commitment Assessment Survey and include in the RCP Table and may list SAFE species program goals/objectives related to the *ex situ* population in the SSP Roles and SMAART Goals Table or simply hyperlink to the species' SAFE program plan using the specific link to the species' program plan or a general link to <https://www.aza.org/safe-species>, where all program plans are posted. SAFE program leaders may want to encourage TAG chairs to list *ex situ* management objectives that relate to requests to the AZA community, such as "increase capacity by X spaces to assist with population growth to accommodate recovery goals".

General Responsibilities for Population Coordinators and Studbook Keepers

SAFE species programs are overseen by a SAFE program leader, and for management of the *ex situ* population, the program may designate two roles: a population coordinator and studbook keeper. The roles may be filled with different people or by the same individual, who must:

- Maintain an individual AZA membership, affirming agreement with the AZA Code of Professional Ethics and granting them access to AZA's online services.
 - AZA encourages facilities to sponsor studbook keepers' memberships as part of their organization's support.
- Maintain current contact information in "My AZA" so it is available to AZA and colleagues.
- Adhere to "[AZA Communications Guidelines](#)", which cover professionalism and appropriate communication structure for everyone working on AZA initiatives.
- Reflect active release of animals *in situ*, or plans for future release in each studbook and breeding and transfer plan.
- Include objectives related to the role of the *ex situ* population toward *in situ* recovery in the relevant SAFE program plan (see example "[Guidance for Incorporating Ex Situ Population Management into SAFE Program Plans](#)").
- Meet their respective obligations to prepare for a population planning meeting with the PMC; a dual responsibility of both roles.

They also should:

- Attend relevant SAFE program meetings (virtually and in-person), when possible.

- SAFE species programs are expected to hold, electronically or in person, working meetings and/or workshops, and are encouraged to hold their in-person meetings in conjunction with the AZA Annual Conference and/or Mid-Year Meeting.
- Communicate concerns and potential conflicts to SAFE program leaders and their WCC liaison.
 - WCC liaisons should communicate those conflicts to the WCC vice chair of SAFE to help the committee stay apprised of larger patterns or issues and to advise on resolving those conflicts on a case-by-case basis.

Studbook Keeper Eligibility, Selection, Departure, and Responsibilities

Studbook keepers must:

- Complete AZA professional development course "[Population Management 1 \(PM1\): Data Management and Processing](#)" within two years of becoming a studbook keeper.
 - PM1 describes the expectations of a studbook keeper and provides them with the tools needed to prepare a studbook of the quality and in the formats necessary for PMC to develop high-quality population management plans. Non-AZA facilities hosting studbook keepers must commit to having the studbook keeper take this course to hold this role and receive access to AZA Center services.
- Submit an application and Statement of Commitment and Support to serve in the role.
- Provide a written notice of departure to resign from the role to the SAFE program leader, SAFE population coordinator, WCC liaison, and AZA; provide all relevant studbook documents (including backup documents if not in ZIMS for Studbooks) to the SAFE program leader, SAFE population coordinator, and to the replacement studbook keeper (if known).
- Communicate with the relevant TAG, so that TAG can meet its requirement of listing all studbooks in their Regional Collection Plan (RCP). This includes informing the relevant TAG(s) when a new studbook is created for *ex situ* populations for purposes of *in situ* recovery.
- Follow all AZA and WAZA criteria for [international studbooks](#) approved by WAZA's Committee on Population Management.
- Follow all guidelines for master planning and reporting as outlined in the [Resource Manual for Global Species Management Plans](#) if the program is part of a Global Species Management Plan (GSMP).

Studbook keepers should:

- Be employed by an AZA facility.
 - There are benefits for filling the role of the studbook keeper with an applicant employed by an AZA member facility. Familiarity with AZA practices, tools, and communications is helpful; as is accountability to AZA standards. It is understood that there may be times when a SAFE steering committee deems a person employed at a non-AZA facility to be in the best interest of the program. In that case, a secondary point of contact at that organization, ideally the person's supervisor, should be identified.
- Complete AZA professional development course "[Population Management 2 \(PM2\): Data Analysis and Breeding Recommendations](#)".
 - PM2 teaches the integration of demography, genetics, and husbandry to set population goals and make breeding and transfer recommendations, along with management skills to help coordinate programs.

Studbook keepers are elected by their SAFE steering committee. Studbook vacancies must be announced in AZA's monthly Animal Programs Update and listed on the Current Program Leader Vacancy webpage on the AZA website for a minimum of 30 days, unless prohibited by an external management authority. AZA requires SAFE studbook keeper vacancies to be submitted to AZA's

Conservation, Management, and Welfare Science (CMWS) department for posting on AZA's website to maximize awareness and transparency. Program leaders should also notify all program partners of the vacancy, including non-AZA facilities, involved in the specific SAFE species program. SAFE program leaders must submit communications to WCC and AZA's CMWS department showing that posting the vacancy is prohibited by an external (i.e., non-AZA) management authority to avoid the required public posting.

For current programs (e.g., historic SSP programs or AZA regional studbooks), SAFE species programs may choose to affirm a historic studbook keeper, rather than advertise a vacancy or hold an election. In those cases, the studbook keeper is still required to submit a Statement of Commitment and Support.

Studbook keeper applications and Statements of Commitment and Support must be submitted to the SAFE program leader, or to the WCC vice chair for SAFE if the SAFE species program does not have a current, approved program plan or there is no program leader. The SAFE program leader will submit all applications to the steering committee; winner is elected by a majority vote and the program secretary, or AZA, will report the outcome to the applicant pool. The SAFE program leader or a member of the steering committee may choose to conduct a reference check for the applicant with the relevant TAG chair, as appropriate. The secretary or AZA should communicate the outcome to the relevant TAG chair for awareness and transparency.

A studbook keeper who leaves their current place of employment but wants to maintain their role as studbook keeper must confirm that their new facility (if employed) endorses their continued role as studbook keeper by submitting a new Statement of Commitment and Support to the SAFE program leader within 90 days of departure from their original facility. Due to the knowledge required for fulfilling this role, the assumption is that, with the support of the new employer, the studbook will move with the person to their new facility.

If the studbook keeper is not employed (retired, private consultant, etc.) and/or leaves the field but wants to maintain their role, the SAFE program leader must submit a letter to AZA's CMWS department indicating their support for the person to continue serving this role within 90 days of departure of the studbook keeper from their original facility. To retain their position, they must remain engaged and responsive to the SAFE program leader, AZA, and the PMC.

If the studbook keeper does not wish to maintain the role or the new facility does not endorse the person to maintain it, they should communicate this decision as soon as possible to the SAFE program leader and population coordinator. The position will be assumed to have been vacated if a new statement of commitment has not been received within 90-days or there is a lack of communication within 30 days of a change in employment. At that time, the SAFE species program may proceed with filling the vacancy, in consultation with the relevant external management authority, if any, and the WCC.

SAFE steering committees are oversight bodies and may choose to remove a studbook keeper and end their access to ZIMS for Studbooks if the studbook keeper is not communicative with the SAFE program leader and colleagues, in consultation with any external management authorities.

Population Coordinator Eligibility, Selection, Departure, and Responsibilities

Population coordinators must:

- Submit an application and Statement of Commitment and Support to serve in the role.

- Review the program’s institutional representative (IR)⁵ list on a regular basis, annually at minimum. This list should be used for all communications about population management for the program. IR lists can be downloaded on the SAFE program’s page of AZA’s online Animal Programs Database.
 - Population coordinators will contact institutional liaisons (ILs) for AZA facilities that do not have a designated IR or have incorrect IRs listed and will ask them to send IR information to AZA’s CMWS department.
 - For non-AZA facilities, population coordinators are responsible for communicating changes to IRs to AZA’s CMWS department.
- Assess and address the wants and needs of program partners, including the *in situ* recovery targets. Assure that all program participants have an opportunity to communicate their wants and needs in the planning process.
- Ensure that the relevant government authority is aware of possible side effects or other outcomes (e.g., behavioral or physiological changes) of contraceptives or other reproductive management approaches to be implemented in the population.
 - The population coordinator is strongly advised to consult with the RMC on these matters, and the RMC can be involved in discussions with the relevant government authority, as needed.
- Schedule a planning meeting with the PMC at least 12 months in advance.
 - Initial PMC scheduling identifies the target month for planning. The PMC will contact the SAFE population coordinator at least eight weeks before the targeted month to confirm the final planning meeting date and meeting format.
- Publish an updated breeding and transfer plan, at minimum, every three years, in accordance with the date listed on the front cover of the previous publication. Adjustments to frequency must be mutually agreed upon between the program and the PMC to reflect the needs of the reintroduction program; for example, annual updates may be preferred.
- Provide a written notice of departure to resign from the role to the SAFE program leader, WCC liaison, and AZA; ensure SAFE program leader and studbook keeper have all relevant population management documents (e.g., previous wants and needs surveys, previous breeding and transfer plans, interim documents).

Population coordinators should:

- Be employed by an AZA facility.
 - There are benefits for filling the role of the population coordinator with an applicant employed by an AZA member facility. Familiarity with AZA practices, tools, and communications is helpful; as is accountability to AZA standards. It is understood that there may be times when an external (i.e., non-AZA) management authority or SAFE steering committee deems a person employed at a non-AZA facility to be in the best interest of the program. In that case, a secondary point of contact at that organization, ideally the person’s supervisor, should be identified.
- Complete AZA professional development course “Population Management 1 (PM1): Data Management and Processing”.
 - PM1 describes the expectations and provides people with the tools needed to help the PMC develop high-quality population management plans for their program’s population.
- Complete AZA professional development course “Population Management 2 (PM2): Data Analysis and Breeding Recommendations”.

⁵ In addition to identifying an IR for population management purposes, facilities will also designate a SAFE program partner representative (PPR) to the SAFE species program (this may be the same, or a different, person).

- PM2 teaches the integration of demography, genetics, and husbandry to set population goals and make breeding and transfer recommendations, along with management skills to help coordinate programs.

Population coordinators are elected by their SAFE steering committee. Population coordinator vacancies must be announced in AZA's monthly Animal Programs Update and listed on the Current Program Leader Vacancy webpage on the AZA website for a minimum of 30 days, unless prohibited by an external management authority. AZA requires SAFE population coordinator vacancies to be submitted to AZA's CMWS department for posting on AZA's website to maximize awareness and transparency. Program leaders should also notify all program partners of the vacancy, including non-AZA facilities, involved in the specific SAFE species program. SAFE program leaders must submit communications to WCC and AZA's CMWS department showing that posting the vacancy is prohibited by an external (i.e., non-AZA) management authority to avoid the required public posting.

For historic or inactive AZA programs (e.g., historic SSP programs or AZA regional studbooks), SAFE species programs may choose to affirm an historic population coordinator, rather than advertise a vacancy or hold an election. In those cases, the population coordinator is still required to submit a Statement of Commitment and Support.

Population coordinator applications and Statements of Commitment and Support must be submitted to the SAFE program leader, or the WCC vice chair of SAFE if the SAFE program does not have a current, approved program plan or there is no program leader. The SAFE program leader will submit all applications to the steering committee; winner is elected by a majority vote and the program secretary, or AZA, reports the outcome to applicant pool. The SAFE program leader or a member of the steering committee may choose to conduct a reference check for the applicant with the relevant TAG chair, as appropriate. The secretary or AZA should communicate the outcome to the relevant TAG chair, for awareness and transparency.

A population coordinator who leaves their current place of employment but wants to maintain their role as population coordinator must confirm that their new facility (if employed) endorses their continued role as population coordinator by submitting a new Statement of Commitment and Support to the SAFE program leader within 90 days of departure from their original facility. Due to the knowledge required for fulfilling this role, the assumption is that, with the support of the new employer, the population coordinator role will move with the person to their new facility.

If the population coordinator is not employed (retired, private consultant, etc.), and/or leaves the field but wants to maintain their role, the SAFE program leader must submit a letter to AZA's CMWS department indicating their support for the person to continue serving this role within 90 days of departure of the population coordinator from their original facility. To retain their position, they must remain engaged and responsive to the SAFE program leader and AZA.

If the population coordinator does not wish to maintain the role or the new facility does not endorse the person to maintain it, they should communicate this decision as soon as possible to the SAFE program leader. The position will be assumed to have been vacated if a new statement of commitment has not been received within 90-days or there is a lack of communication within 30 days of a change in employment. A lack of communication within one month of a change in employment. At that time, the SAFE species program may proceed with filling the vacancy, in consultation with the relevant external management authority, if any, and the WCC.

SAFE steering committees are oversight bodies and may choose to remove a population coordinator and end their access to ZIMS for Studbooks, if the population coordinator is not communicative with the SAFE program leader and colleagues, in consultation with any external management authorities.

Studbook Management

Studbooks represent best practice for effective population management. A studbook is required for programs that use *ex situ* population management for species conservation and recovery and access services from AZA's Population and Reproductive Management Centers.

Studbooks should be managed in ZIMS for Studbooks and adhere to "[Guidelines for Data Entry and Maintenance of AZA Regional Studbooks](#)", although other formats may be considered under advisement of the PMC. AZA will grant a studbook keeper access to ZIMS for Studbooks, if the person is not employed by a member of Species360 and would like to manage their studbook in ZIMS for Studbooks.

The studbook keeper must coordinate with their program's population coordinator and PMC population biologist regarding the timeline to update their program's studbook in time for use in the next regularly scheduled planning meeting. The frequency of PMC services will be mutually agreed upon between the program and PMC, based on biology and the requirements of the recovery program.

To prepare properly for the meeting, the population coordinator and studbook keeper have a shared obligation to update the studbook and notify the PMC that the updates are complete six weeks prior to planning with PMC⁶. Any issues identified by the PMC must be addressed in a timely manner so that the planning may occur as scheduled. Both the population coordinator and the studbook keeper should prioritize their program's planning meeting with the PMC. If circumstances require changing the meeting, the population coordinator or studbook keeper should communicate directly with the PMC, as well as with each other, the SAFE program leader, and AZA.

The studbook database must be updated at least every three years, in accordance with the planning meeting date recorded in the previous breeding and transfer plan. If the studbook is maintained outside of ZIMS for Studbooks, a copy of the updated studbook database will be submitted to the PMC at least every three years. This frequency is the minimum expectation, and adjustments may be made to reflect the needs of the reintroduction program; annual updates may be preferred.

For programs using ZIMS for Studbooks, the studbook keeper may grant access of the studbook to related parties depending on need and individual role as outlined in "[AZA Guidelines for I. Roles and Access to ZIMS for Studbooks, and II. Sharing Studbook Data](#)." When ZIMS for Studbooks is used, the studbook keeper may grant viewing access to related parties (e.g., population coordinator, advisors). Approval from the studbook keeper and WCC is required for additional access permissions (e.g., for research). Research requests are to be sent to the WCC liaison for the relevant SAFE species program(s), who will share it with the full WCC, including a PMC advisor. Each committee member will send their comments to the WCC liaison who will share the compiled comments at a WCC meeting before the committee votes to approve/not approve a request.

For programs not using ZIMS for Studbooks, the studbook keeper will assess and provide similar levels of access, and follow similar guidelines in assessing need and WCC review of research requests, to data stored in other databases.

If there is a separate international studbook keeper for the species or if data are combined in a single international studbook, the AZA studbook keeper is responsible for current and accurate AZA data needed for AZA population analyses and is to provide data to the International Studbook Keeper for the studbook species, if applicable.

⁶ Note that the creation, updating, and submission of a studbook *publication* to AZA for publication on the AZA website is **optional** for SAFE species programs that utilize PMC/RMC services. If the program chooses to create a studbook publication, it must include all elements of the publications developed for AZA regional studbooks in order to be published on AZA's website. This optional publication is separate from the updated database that is needed by the PMC for planning purposes.

Breeding and Transfer Plans

The PMC will develop the breeding and transfer plan in collaboration with the population coordinator and studbook keeper. The frequency of these plans will be at a minimum of every three years or as often as annually, as appropriate to support recovery and as identified in the SAFE program plan.

To prepare for planning, programs may use PMCTrack, including for Studbook/IR comparison, interim recommendations, wants and needs surveys, and outcomes surveys. Use of PMCTrack functionality may be helpful for populations that are largely AZA-based, were previously operating as SSPs that had used PMCTrack, and that find its surveys well suited to their management. PMCTrack may or may not be an appropriate tool for other SAFE programs.

The PMC will share the draft breeding and transfer plans with all IRs at all program partners and participating organizations (including external management authorities), the program's population coordinator, studbook keeper, WCC liaison, and AZA for a 30-day review as soon as possible after a planning session with PMC. External management authorities (i.e., non-AZA entities) must also identify any concerns with the content, including recommendations, in the breeding and transfer plan during this 30-day review period. All comments should be sent to the population coordinator who will compile them and discuss with the program's population biologist. Direct confirmation or no response affirms their support for the organizations included (AZA and non-AZA) and agreement with the recommendations, and all agreed upon recommendations must be followed. Circulating a draft plan may be bypassed if in regular planning there is typically no change between Draft and Final because most animals are held at the facilities designing the plan.

Upon completion of the 30-day review period, the population coordinator, studbook keeper, and population biologist will discuss any needed changes to the recommendations and report. Then the final breeding and transfer plans will be sent by the PMC to AZA's CMWS department and published on the Animal Programs portal on AZA's website and announced in AZA's monthly Animal Programs update. Even if there is minimal involvement from AZA facilities (with the majority of program involvement being non-AZA), posting the breeding and transfer plan provides access to and awareness of facility involvement and program progress toward breeding and recovery efforts. Exceptions may be made by WCC to the posting of the breeding and transfer plan for specific SAFE species programs if information is deemed sensitive, in consultation with an external management authority.

A population coordinator may request an extension to publish their breeding and transfer plan by contacting their SAFE program leader, if there is a current, approved SAFE program plan. If deemed appropriate, the SAFE program leader and population coordinator must work with AZA's PMC to identify and select a new date and then contact AZA's CMWS department and WCC liaison with the approved new date and deadline. If the SAFE species program does not have a current, approved program plan, the population coordinator must contact their SAFE program leader, WCC vice chair for SAFE, and AZA's CMWS department to request an extension and propose a new deadline. The WCC vice chair will work with the WCC to approve/not approve the extension request and communicate the decision to the SAFE program leader and population coordinator.

The PMC tracks the dates for the planning meeting and for when the breeding and transfer plan is completed. AZA's CMWS department tracks accountability deadlines based on the date recorded on the front of the posted breeding and transfer plan. If the population coordinator did not request an extension prior to the breeding and transfer plan accountability deadline, the coordinator has two weeks to describe to the SAFE program leader and the WCC vice chair of SAFE the reason for missing the date and to request a new deadline. The WCC vice chair of SAFE will determine if the reason for the missed deadline for the completion of the breeding and transfer plan is valid, and if so, will work with the SAFE program leader, population coordinator, and PMC to set a new deadline. They may discuss the situation with the WCC Executive Committee, WCC liaison, or others, as needed. They may also consider previous extension requests, ongoing issues with the program, population coordinator, or other concerns in considering extensions. In some cases, the population coordinator may be asked to resign their role.

Breeding and transfer plans developed for SAFE species programs that can confirm they meet the eligibility criteria for receiving PMC services but have opted to use population biologists outside the PMC will also be posted on AZA's website. These publications must identify the author and include a disclaimer that the plan is not a product of AZA's PMC. Population planners outside AZA's PMC are encouraged to use a similar template and include similar content as is found in breeding and transfer plans developed by AZA's PMC; however, no references to the PMC may be included (e.g., logos). AZA members are accustomed to using this format, facilitating their engagement and cooperation and representing best practices in data management and transparency in decision making.

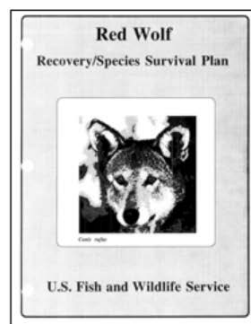
Breeding and transfer plans developed for SAFE species programs that do not meet the criteria to receive PMC services (e.g., *ex situ* population management is not required for *in situ* recovery) will not be posted on AZA's website.

Incorporating *Ex Situ* Population Management into SAFE Program Plans

Some suggestions are provided that might help with the development of a SAFE program plan for programs that use *ex situ* population management as conservation strategy.

1. *Ex situ* management is one of the strategies being used for species recovery. SAFE species programs may be focused on just that element, in which case the program plan may be very tightly focused on providing animals for release. Alternately, AZA partners may already be working more broadly on additional elements of recovery (e.g., monitoring at field sites, engagement with affected communities), in which case the SAFE program plan may be broader and have multiple objectives.
2. Regardless of whether a narrow or broad approach is taken, objectives focused on management of the *ex situ* population to support species recovery must be included when the program plan is developed. For example, the information could be nested as follows:
 - a. The relevant recovery plan cites *ex situ* breeding:

Example – Red Wolves



1990 Recovery Plan (updated recovery plan is in progress)

Recovery Objective: The establishment of 220 red wolves in wild situations and the maintenance of 330 in captivity would provide for genetic stability and maintain the species. For the foreseeable future it is not considered feasible to either delist or downlist this species.

Recovery Criteria: Establish and maintain at least three reintroduction projects within the historic range of the red wolf. This must be paralleled by the cooperation and assistance of at least 30 captive-breeding facilities in the United States. Human attitudes regarding red wolves must be addressed through education processes.

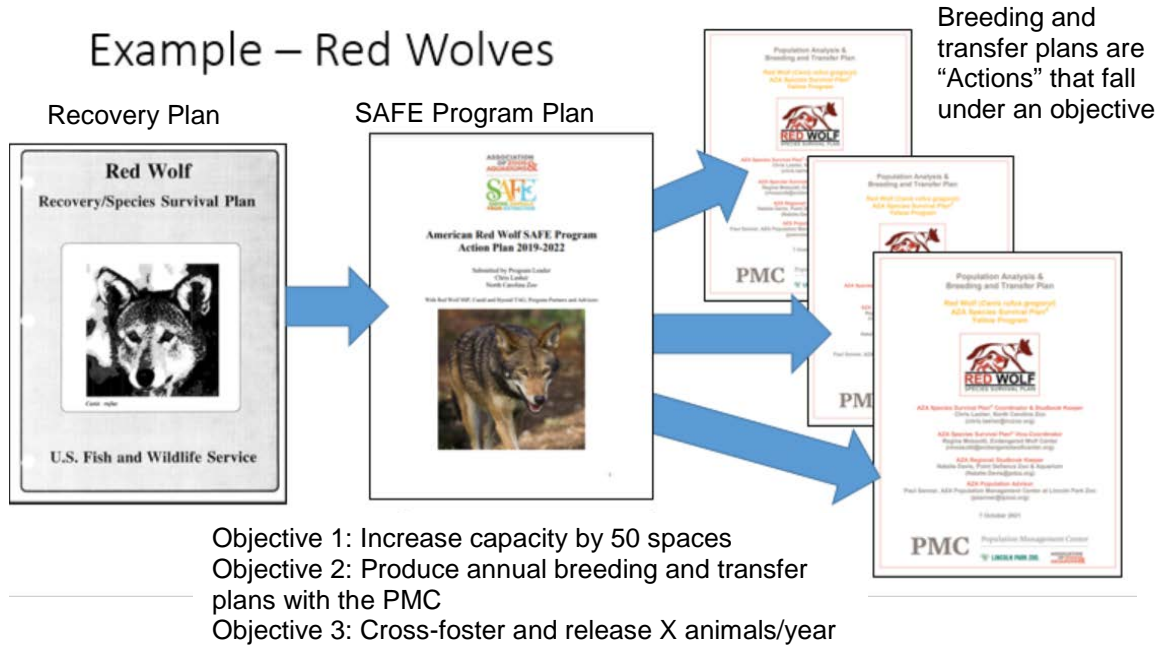
Actions Needed:

1. Maintain and evaluate existing wild populations.
2. Establish new populations in the wild.
3. Expand captive-breeding capabilities.
4. Expand cryopreservation capabilities.

- b. The SAFE program plan would be written with objectives related to goals for the *ex situ* population, such as:
 - i. Objective 1: Increase capacity by 50 spaces⁷
 - ii. Objective 2: Produce annual breeding and transfer plans with the PMC that support recovery targets

⁷ These are a combination of actual and imagined objectives from the SAFE American Red Wolf program plan.

- iii. Objective 3: Cross-foster and release X animals/year for each year of the program plan, adjusted as needed based on the capacity of USFWS for releases
- c. Implementation of the breeding and transfer plans becomes the “Actions” that fall under the objectives:



3. It may be helpful to look at program plans of species that previously had both SSP and SAFE species programs: red wolf, black-footed ferret, eastern indigo snake, and whooping crane have all already navigated some of the challenges of priorities for their *ex situ* populations and *in situ* activities. While the program plan format and template has been updated, their plans may still have some helpful context and elements for building new plans. In addition, the SAFE shark and ray program has incorporated an *ex situ* management element to its most recent plan.
4. Objectives for the first SAFE program plan may focus on making sure that breeding and release needs are being met, or may also explore what other elements, beyond *ex situ* population management, the AZA community may offer that could enhance the program’s conservation impact. Perhaps during the first program plan, strategic planning with partners is a priority to explore new opportunities for AZA facilities to get involved or prioritize grant ideas; or the first program plan may focus on identifying advisors or additional people who are excited and have the skillset to lead other conservation strategies the program has previously considered. It is appropriate to set goals and objectives to get additional elements organized, rather than thinking all need to be executed during the first SAFE program plan.

Summary Table of Key Differences Between SSP and SAFE *Ex Situ* Population Management

This table summarizes key differences in processes between SSP and SAFE programs that utilize *ex situ* population management for *in situ* recovery.

Action	SSP	SAFE	Explanation
Work and communicate with taxa-adjacent TAG and SSP Coordinators	Required	Recommended	SAFE species programs are encouraged to collaborate as appropriate or desired with other management structures related to their species (SSPs, TAGs, Advisors).

			TAGs are required to list SAFE species programs within their Regional Collection Plans (RCPs) in the Animal Programs Summary Table.
Resolve conflicts	Process developed	Process to be developed that reflects needs brought to WCC	Studbook keepers and population coordinators should communicate concerns and potential conflicts to SAFE program leaders and their WCC liaison. WCC liaisons should communicate those conflicts to the WCC vice chair of SAFE to help the committee stay apprised of larger patterns or issues and to advise on resolving those conflicts on a case-by-case basis.
Reflect active release of animals <i>in situ</i> , or plans for future release	Not applicable	Required	<p>If the SAFE species program stops actively releasing animals, or if plans for a future release become stalled indefinitely, WCC reserves the option to re-evaluate access to PMC/RMC services, in collaboration with the program.</p> <p>Releases should be reflected in each studbook and breeding and transfer plan. Objectives related to the role of the <i>ex situ</i> population toward <i>in situ</i> recovery must be included in the relevant SAFE program plan.</p>
Employment of studbook keeper by AZA facility	Required	Recommended	<p>There are benefits for filling the role of the studbook keeper with an applicant employed by an AZA member facility. Familiarity with AZA practices, tools, and communications is helpful; as is accountability to AZA standards.</p> <p>There may be times when a SAFE steering committee deems a person employed at a non-AZA facility to be in the best interest of the program. In that case, a secondary point of contact at that organization, ideally the person's supervisor, should be identified.</p>
Studbook to be managed in ZIMS for Studbooks and adhere to "Guidelines for Data Entry and Maintenance of AZA Regional Studbooks".	Required, with limited exceptions	Recommended in ZIMS for Studbooks; other formats may be considered under advisement of PMC	
Create and submit a studbook publication to AZA for publication on the AZA website	Required	Optional	Based on responses to an April-May 2024 survey of the 10 programs that were accessing PMC services for recovery programs, the creation and submission of a PDF studbook publication will be optional for these programs. The WCC may revisit this topic periodically. If the program chooses to create a studbook publication, it must include all elements of the publications developed for regional studbooks in order to be published on AZA's website.
Update studbook	Required; for SSPs,	Required; for SAFE	This frequency is the minimum

database and notify (if in ZIMS for Studbooks) or submit to (if not in ZIMS for Studbooks) the PMC at least every three years.	the date tracked is based on the studbook publication	species programs, the date tracked is based on the planning meeting date recorded in the previous breeding and transfer plan	expectation, and adjustments may be made to reflect the needs of the reintroduction program; annual updates may be preferred.
Studbook keeper is not employed (retired, private consultant, etc.) and/or leaves the field but wants to maintain their role.	Not allowed; there is a 6-month grace period to find another position at an AZA-accredited facility when a studbook keeper leaves their position at an AZA-accredited facility	Required to have SAFE program leader support and for studbook keeper to be engaged and responsive	The SAFE program leader must submit a letter to AZA's CMWS department indicating their support for the person to continue serving this role within 90 days of departure of the studbook keeper from their original facility. To retain their position, the studbook keeper must remain engaged and responsive to the SAFE program leader and AZA.
The WCC and APM Committee will review and approve the creation of new studbooks for <i>ex situ</i> populations for purposes of <i>in situ</i> recovery through review of a submitted SAFE proposal (if not yet a SAFE species program) and a <i>Request for Center Services</i> .	Not applicable	Required	APMC becomes aware of new studbooks through participation in the review of <i>Requests for Center Services</i> . The studbook keeper informs the relevant TAG(s), once approved.
Programs use PMCTrack in the planning process.	Required, with occasional exemptions allowed	Optional, based on discussion between PMC advisor and SAFE species program	Use of PMCTrack functionality may be helpful for populations that are largely AZA based, were previously operating as SSPs that had used PMCTrack, and that find its surveys well-suited to their management. PMCTrack may or may not be an appropriate tool for other SAFE species programs.
30-day review period of draft breeding and transfer plan.	Required	Required, with exceptions allowed based on discussions among the PMC advisor, studbook keeper, population coordinator, SAFE program leader, and relevant external management authority, if any	The PMC will share the draft breeding and transfer plans with all Institutional Representatives (IRs) at all program partners (including external management authorities) and participating organizations, the program's population biologist and studbook keeper, WCC liaison, and AZA for a 30-day review as soon as possible after a planning session with PMC.
The PMC develops the final breeding and transfer plan in collaboration with the population coordinator and studbook keeper.	Required at least every 3 years	Required at an appropriate frequency to support recovery, as identified in the SAFE program plan	
Final breeding and transfer plan will be published on the Animal Programs portal on	Required	Required, with limited exceptions	Even if there is minimal involvement from AZA facilities (with majority of program involvement being non-AZA), posting the breeding and transfer plan provides

AZA's website and announced in AZA's monthly Animal Programs update.			access to and awareness of facility involvement and program progress toward breeding and recovery efforts. Exceptions may be made by WCC to the posting of the breeding and transfer plan for specific SAFE species programs if information is deemed sensitive, in consultation with external management authority.
Breeding and transfer plans developed for SAFE species programs that can confirm they meet the eligibility criteria for receiving PMC services but have opted to use population biologists outside the PMC will also be posted on AZA's website.	Not applicable	Required to identify the author and to include a disclaimer that the plan is not a product of AZA's PMC	Population planners outside AZA's PMC are encouraged to use a similar template and include similar content as is found in breeding and transfer plans developed by AZA's PMC. Breeding and transfer plans developed for SAFE species programs that do not meet the criteria to receive PMC services (e.g., <i>ex situ</i> population management is not required for <i>in situ</i> recovery) will not be posted on AZA's website.
Employment of population coordinator by AZA facility.	Required	Recommended	There are benefits for filling the role of the population coordinator with an applicant employed by an AZA member facility. Familiarity with AZA practices, tools, and communications is helpful; as is accountability to AZA standards. There may be times when an external (i.e., non-AZA) management authority or SAFE steering committee deems a person employed at a non-AZA facility to be in the best interest of the program. In that case, a secondary point of contact at that organization, ideally the person's supervisor, should be identified.
Population coordinator is not employed (retired, private consultant, etc.) and/or leaves the field but wants to maintain their role.	Not allowed; there is a 6-month grace period to find another position at an AZA-accredited facility when a population coordinator leaves their position at an AZA-accredited facility	Required to have SAFE program leader support and for population coordinator to be engaged and responsive	The SAFE program leader must submit a letter to AZA's CMWS department indicating their support for the person to continue serving this role within 90 days of departure of the population coordinator from their original facility. To retain their position, the population coordinator keeper must remain engaged and responsive to the SAFE program leader and AZA.

Chapter 6. Organizational Considerations

Program Structure

All AZA SAFE Species programs should be composed of the WCC Liaison, a Program Leader and Vice Program Leader, a Steering Committee, and Advisors in order to incorporate an extensive and diverse amount of experience and expertise. The program may design its operating and organizational structure as best it sees fit and may differ for programs comprised primarily of AZA members compared to those primarily comprised of non-AZA participants.

For example, programs that are largely constituted of AZA members may consider including additional officer positions beyond the Program Leader and Vice Program Leader, such as Secretary and Treasurer. Steering Committees generally include 5-15 participants and would be composed of representatives from Program Partners; for groups with a large number of partners, the Steering Committee should be elected from among the Program Partners. Officers, with the exception of the Program Leader, should be elected from the Steering Committee and the Steering Committee should form the electorate for that vote.

Some programs may be based upon existing groups that are composed of many non-AZA participants, such as a government-led Recovery Team. In this case, the AZA members of the Recovery Team may apply for designation as a SAFE Species program. The responsibilities of the Program Leader would still be the same, including communication and engagement with AZA and other AZA members. In developing an appropriate SAFE program structure that is sensitive to an existing structure, the Program Leader should consult with their WCC Liaison or the WCC Vice Chair of SAFE.

Positions

Each SAFE species program should develop an organizational structure that works for it, and each may ultimately have a slightly different organization and composition. That said, over the course of AZA history, some items have emerged that may be best practices for SAFE species program development. The following provides an overview of positions and their functions; for specific eligibility guidelines and details of essential functions see [Appendix A](#).

Program Leader Position Overview

The Program Leader serves as the primary point of contact for the Program Partners and AZA staff. The Program Leader position holds responsibilities critical to the success of AZA's SAFE species programs. The primary responsibility of the Program Leader is to lead the Program Partners to build on existing conservation plans to create a program plan which includes measurable conservation actions and engages additional collaborators within AZA community and beyond. Additional responsibilities include: 1) working closely and in a timely manner with the Program Partners, AZA Wildlife Conservation Committee Liaison, and AZA staff to maintain forward movement on the program plan; (2) monitoring and evaluating action item implementation and progress toward measurable outcomes; (3) working with Program Partners to adapt the program plan, budget, and timelines as necessary; (4) managing funds raised for the program (in association with the Treasurer, as available), and (5) providing project updates and reports to the Project Partners and AZA, at least once a year. It is important for the Program Leader to work closely with the WCC Liaison on all matters related to the program's ongoing operations. It is expected that the Program Leader will continue in that position beyond the duration of the program plan's timeline and would be responsible for adapting and developing subsequent program plans. If that is not to be the case, the Program Leader should work with the WCC Liaison and Program Partners to identify a new Program Leader.

Vice Program Leader

Position Overview

It is strongly recommended that a Vice Program Leader is elected from the Steering Committee members. It is presumed that if, for any reason, the Program Leader must vacate the position, the Vice Program Leader will assume all Program Leader-related duties until a new one is selected by the Steering Committee.

Steering Committee

Overview

The Steering Committee serves as the voting body for program business, and members should be integrally involved in the program's decision making, appointments, reports, and meetings. The Steering Committee should be composed of five to 15 members, as appropriate for the program, including Officers. Steering Committee members should represent a Program Partner, with a Statement of Institutional Support form submitted to AZA's CMWS Department, and no Program Partner should have more than one representative on the Steering Committee. If there is a large number of Program Partners, elections should be held to select Steering Committee members from among the Program Partners.

Additional Suggested Positions

Secretary

Position Overview

The Secretary keeps a written record of the program's elections, votes, and official meetings, and communicates these records, and any programmatic changes to the Program Partners, the WCC Liaison, and AZA staff.

Treasurer

Position Overview

If the program's work involves any funds raised by the group, then AZA's guidelines for creating and managing externally held [dedicated funds](#) must be met. Dedicated Fund accounts are held by AZA member institutions, and used to support projects initiated and/or coordinated under SAFE auspices. A Treasurer should be designated and an AZA SAFE Dedicated Fund account should be used to manage those funds. Treasurers collect, disburse, and archive written records of all program financial transactions. Treasurers are responsible for managing money in AZA SAFE Dedicated Fund accounts to assure that all funds are used for their intended purpose.

Program Partner Representatives

Position Overview

The Program Partner Representative is the primary contact between the representative's institution and the Program Leader of the designated SAFE species program. The Program Partner Representative is responsible for maintaining open communication between the program and the institution, communicating to the Program Leader on behalf of the institution, and participating in program communications and activities. The role of each Program Partner Representative will vary across the SAFE programs and over the course of the program plan's implementation, reflecting each representative's expertise and the activities (and timing of those activities) that they are helping to implement.

One individual may serve as the Program Partner Representative for more than one SAFE species program at an institution; however, the duties for each program are independent of each other.

An institution may identify one or more Program Partner Representative(s) to participate in multiple SAFE species programs, and should expect to participate meaningfully in each program, helping each achieve its program plan goals and objectives.

External Experts

Advisors

Overview

Advisors, often members of corresponding AZA Committees, Animal Programs, Advisory Groups, IUCN SSCs, or species experts, may play a useful role in advising, designing, and executing conservation and stakeholder engagement decisions within SAFE species programs. Programs are encouraged to work with as many Advisors as appropriate for their program in order to implement superlative species conservation initiatives. Advisors do not need to be employed by an AZA member institution. Advisors do not vote on program issues unless they also serve as a Program Partner Representative.

Suggested Advisors, as appropriate

Animal Health/ Veterinary
Conservation Education
Government Affairs
Green Practices
Marketing
Public Relations
Research
Reproduction/Endocrinology
IUCN/SSC staff
Taxonomic or Disciplinary IUCN/SSC Specialist Groups

WCC Vice Chair of SAFE

Position Overview

The WCC Vice Chair of SAFE is a member of the WCC who oversees implementation of the SAFE species program, acting as a resource for WCC Liaisons and Program Leaders, and working closely with the WCC Chair and AZA Conservation, Management, and Welfare Sciences Department to assure reputability and overall coordination of this effort. The Vice Chair will engage WCC members as Liaisons to individual SAFE species programs and maintain consistent and open communication with them about their programs.

WCC Liaison

Position Overview

The WCC Liaison is a member of the WCC who serves as the primary contact between the WCC and the Program Leader of a SAFE species program. A WCC Liaison may also serve as a member of any SAFE species program Steering Committee, including the program they liaise for. The WCC Liaison is accountable for maintaining consistent communications with the SAFE species program throughout the year; these communications may revolve around the program plan drafting and review process, program reporting deadlines, implementation of activities and progress toward objectives, and any updates to the WCC Vice Chair of SAFE on extension requests and new information relevant for the WCC. Similarly, the SAFE species program should maintain consistent and open communication with its WCC Liaison. In doing so, the WCC Liaison will best be able to provide resources pertaining to AZA SAFE guidelines for program planning and accountability processes.

Chapter 7. Program Administration

Just as each program will be organized in a unique fashion, programs may be administered in the manner that maximizes efficiency and transparency for their group. Some recommended best practices and considerations for administration are detailed below.

Elections

Steering Committees are encouraged to use open, transparent, democratic processes for filling open positions and for other business of the group. Some typical practices may include:

- The Program Leader manages open positions by advising the Steering Committee of open Officer positions and Steering Committee vacancies. Nominations are sought from existing Steering Committee members and Program Partners.
- Nominees for Officer positions submit a [Program Officer Statement of Individual Commitment and Institutional Support](#) to a program Secretary who will distribute to the Steering Committee and the program's WCC Liaison. Having documentation of institutional support prior to elections is helpful.
- Program Leaders are encouraged to record the purpose and outcomes of all votes, and may include that information in annual reports to the WCC.

There are no WCC-mandated term limits for Program Officers and Steering Committee members. The WCC encourages programs to create a system of term rotations of Steering Committee members to provide opportunities to involve new members. Program Officers and Steering Committee members are elected from the Program Partner Representatives. All institutions are able to participate in the program through their representatives.

Program Leaders should discuss Steering Committee concerns with their WCC Liaison who will provide guidance and assistance in resolving issues.

Change in Employment or Institutional Status

Should the Program Leader move to a new AZA member institution or lose employment with an AZA member institution, the Program Leader's original institution which provided the most recent Program Leader Statement of Institutional Support has the choice to nominate a new individual for the position.

Change of Institution

Program Leader and Vice Program Leader

- Program Leaders who move to a new AZA member institution will, within 90 days of departure from their original institution, submit new Statements of Individual Commitment and Institutional Support to their WCC Liaison and the AZA CMWS Department.

Program Leaders are expected to update their new contact information, including institution, phone, and email via the AZA website by logging into their account on "My AZA."

Loss of Employment

Program Leader and Vice Program Leader

- If a Program Leader loses employment with an AZA member institution, the individual has six months to re-gain employment with an AZA member institution before a new Program Leader is selected.
- If a Program Leader is no longer employed at an AZA member institution and fails to communicate with the WCC Liaison or the AZA CMWS Department within one month, it will be assumed that the Program Leader has abandoned the role in the program and the Program Partners may proceed with filling the vacancy before the six-month grace period is over.

Member Institution Loss of Accreditation or Certification

Program Leader and Vice Program Leader

- If a Program Leader's institution loses accreditation, the Program Leader has six months to resign from the program or find employment with an AZA member institution.

Program Partner Resignation or Changes

AZA Program Partners should provide a written notice of resignation to the Program Leader, who will notify the WCC Liaison, the WCC Vice Chair of SAFE, and copy the AZA Conservation Coordinator.

A Program Partner may replace or reassign the individual representing their organization. Such departing Program Partner Representatives should uphold program business confidentiality and, when possible, orient and provide all relevant program documents to their replacement.

WCC Liaison Changes in Status

WCC Liaisons are encouraged to continue their support of the SAFE species program should a change in status occur (change of institution, or loss of employment). Changes in status of the WCC Liaison should be communicated to the Program Leader, the WCC Vice Chair of SAFE, and the AZA Conservation Coordinator in a timely manner. If the WCC Liaison is no longer able to serve as the WCC Liaison, they should inform the Program Leader and WCC Vice Chair of SAFE so that a new WCC Liaison can be assigned. WCC Liaisons, who also serve on steering committees, should clarify their continued support within the Steering Committee role based on their change of institution or loss of employment status.

Program Assessment and Accountability

In order to ensure that all SAFE programs continue to move toward effective conservation, the Program Leader should regularly review the accountability status and performance of the program plan and of Program Partners.

Accountability Emails

Because the SAFE species program seeks to include more AZA-accredited members over time, as well as achieve measurable conservation impact, it is important that AZA is sharing the most current information about each program in its communications (e.g., website). As a result, AZA's Conservation, Management, and Welfare Sciences Department provides courtesy reminders to the Program Leader of upcoming deadlines, such as for submission of the program plan and annual report. Each email includes the appropriate instructions, relevant contact information, and links to the deadline information pages on the AZA website. These emails are sent to Program Leaders and routinely copied to the associated WCC Liaison; they may also be copied to the WCC Vice Chair of SAFE and the WCC Chair. These courtesy emails are sent one month prior to the deadline, when the deadline is reached and two weeks past the deadline.

Program Partner Representative Assessment

- The AZA staff, the WCC Vice Chair of SAFE, and the WCC Liaison are available to provide guidance and assistance with Program Partner Representatives' performance issues.
- The Program Leader should regularly communicate with Program Partner Representatives within the program's purview regarding accountability deadlines and program plan changes, guidelines, publications, etc. and to remain informed about progress toward or challenges in achieving goals defined in the program plan.
- The Program Leader should document Program Partner Representatives that appear not to be adequately and/or appropriately performing their commitments. These concerns should be discussed with the WCC Liaison, the WCC Vice Chair of SAFE, and/or the AZA CMWS Department.

Program Partner Assessment

- The Program Leader should informally assess or track the accountability status and performance of the Program Partners participating in the designated program.
- The Program Leader should discuss any potential issues with the WCC Liaison, the WCC Vice Chair of SAFE, and/or a representative from the AZA CMWS Department.

WCC Liaison Assessment

- The Program Leader should informally assess or track the accountability status and performance of their WCC Liaison's participation in the designated program.
- The Program Leader should discuss any potential issues with the WCC Vice Chair of SAFE, and/or a representative from the AZA CMWS Department.

Chapter 8. Contacts and Web Resources

Contacts

AZA Conservation, Management, and Welfare Sciences Department

Candice Dorsey, Ph.D.
Senior Vice President, Conservation
Management, and Welfare Sciences
301-244-3339
cdorsey@aza.org

Katey Leban, M.S.
Coordinator, Conservation
301-244-3323
kleban@aza.org / safe@aza.org

Shelly Grow, M.S.
Vice President, Conservation and Science
301-244-3363
sgrow@aza.org

Vacant
Program Assistant, Conservation

AZA Web Resources

AZA Board Approved Policies

<https://www.aza.org/board-approved-policies-and-position-statements>

AZA SAFE Homepage

<https://www.aza.org/aza-safe>

The “AZA SAFE” homepage provides public-facing information for the SAFE program, including a high-level SAFE program overview, links to SAFE stories and blog posts, links to all SAFE species programs, and SAFE Annual Reports. SAFE species pages provide general information for all SAFE species programs, as well as published program plans. There are also links to SAFE program resources such as materials/paperwork needed to propose a SAFE species program, and guidelines for developing program plans. Links to SAFE program contributors and corporate sponsorships can also be found on this page.

Animal Programs Database

The Animal Programs Database contains all Animal Program Data, and is separated into Animal Program pages. There are separate pages for TAGs, SSP programs, Studbooks and SAGs. Each Animal Program page can be accessed by going through the Animal Program Page Search Portal:

<https://ams.aza.org/eweb/DynamicPage.aspx?Site=AZA&WebKey=8f652949-31be-4387-876f-f49a2d7263b2>

Each Animal Program page contains the following (*information only available if logged in):

- Program Leader, Officers, Advisors names and contact information*
- Animal Program details (start dates, websites, etc.)
- Animal Program Species
- Related Animal Programs
- Animal Program Documents*
- Animal Program IR list*

Conservation and Research Database

The Conservation and Research Database contains all field conservation and mission-related science projects submitted by AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums and certified related facilities. AZA members are asked to submit these activities each year. The database can be accessed through the Conservation pages on AZA’s website (<https://www.aza.org/conservation>, or directly at:

<https://ams.aza.org/eweb/DynamicPage.aspx?Site=AZA&WebKey=bf0eb751-0a30-49b5-a127-63e380894186>) or by logging into “My AZA.” Users do not need to be members in order to search the database.

Appendix A. Program Position Descriptions, Functions, and Expectations

Required Positions

SAFE Program Leader

Eligibility Requirements

The Program Leader will:

- Be a paid employee of an AZA member facility (AZA Member Institution).
 - The intent of this requirement is to ensure that each Program Leader has the institution's full support to serve as a Program Leader.
- Be an individual member of AZA.
- Be confirmed to serve as the Program Leader by the WCC.
- Provide the [Program Leader Statement of Individual Commitment and Institutional Support](#) with the program proposal, pledging the full support of the institution for the individual to serve as the Program Leader, which will include making necessary time available, supporting necessary travel costs to attend meetings, monitoring progress, and holding the Program Leader accountable for achieving the objectives and goals set for the program plan.
- Expect to be able to commit to the duration of the development, publication and implementation of the program plan.
- Have proven capability in coordinating complex projects or programs.
- Be skilled in working with a multitude of individuals with diverse viewpoints.
- Preferred: skilled with implementing an adaptive management strategy.
- Preferred: species-specific knowledge/experience.

Essential Position Functions

Program Plans

- Oversee development, completion, and submission of a program plan to the WCC within twelve months of a program proposal being approved, following all procedures outlined in this Handbook. At the end of the program plan timeline, the Program Leader will oversee review of the program plan and will recommend adaptation as needed for a subsequent program plan.

Program Administration

- Solicit and engage additional AZA members as appropriate.
- Solicit and engage additional external collaborators (e.g., government agencies, community-based or international non-profit organizations), as needed. Liaise with other regional zoological associations as relevant.
- Work closely and consistently with, and serve as the primary point of contact for the Project Partners, collaborators, AZA Wildlife Conservation Committee, and AZA staff to maintain forward movement on the program plan.
- Convene regular meetings of the parties, ideally in conjunction with the AZA Annual Conference and/or Mid-Year Meeting.
- Monitor and evaluate action item implementation and progress toward measurable outcomes.
- Work with Program Partners to adapt the program plan, budget, and timelines as necessary.
- Work with Program Partners to resolve obstacles or complications as they arise, or proactively if they can be anticipated.
- Manage (in conjunction with Treasurer if there is one) funds raised collaboratively to support the program plan in a restricted pass-through account (e.g., an AZA SAFE Dedicated Fund). If requested by Program Partners, also provide an annual financial report.
- Work with AZA staff to keep SAFE species program webpages current regarding opportunities for AZA member involvement in the program.
- Utilize the SAFE Style Guide to brand materials appropriately. Provide a written report once a year that includes updates on the specific action items in the program plan, as well as a short summary of

recent experiences appropriate for publication in *Connect*, other AZA publications, and/or to be shared with relevant AZA Animal Programs (i.e., TAGs and/or SSPs). Reports will be shared with the Program Partners, AZA staff, and WCC Liaison.

- Communicate any Program Partner performance issues to the WCC Liaison, the WCC Vice Chair of SAFE, or AZA staff, work with the Program Partner to resolve the issues, and communicate the outcome to the WCC contacts.
- Fully understand and abide by the [AZA Code of Professional Ethics](#).

Vice Program Leader

Eligibility Requirements

The SAFE species program Vice Program Leader is expected to:

- Be a paid employee of an AZA member facility (AZA Member Institution).
- Have an individual AZA membership.
- Uphold program business confidentiality.
- Have proficiency in utilizing AZA web resources and the internet, and have email access.
- Have strong skills in organization, communication, facilitation, conflict resolution, and in establishing and maintaining effective working relationships with diverse groups of individuals.
- Provide [Program Officer Statement of Individual Commitment and Institutional Support](#).
- Preferred: Be well versed in the biology and behavior of the taxon/taxa covered by the program.

Essential Position Functions

- Assume all Program Leader-related duties if the Program Leader is unavailable, or that position is vacant.
- Attend program meetings whenever possible.
- Assist the Program Leader in the supporting and monitoring of Program Partners.
- Immediately notify the AZA Conservation, Management, and Welfare Sciences Department of a Program Leader vacancy.
- Assist the Program Leader with filling the Secretary and Treasurer (if applicable) positions if vacant.

Steering Committee

Eligibility Requirements

Members of the Steering Committee are expected to:

- Be paid employees of their institution or organization.
- Represent a current Program Partner, with a Statement of Institutional Support form submitted to AZA's CMWS Department, and have subject matter expertise.
- Uphold program business confidentiality.
- Have proficiency in utilizing AZA web resources and the internet, and have email access.
- Have strong skills in organization, communication, facilitation, conflict resolution, and in establishing and maintaining effective working relationships with diverse groups of individuals.

Essential Position Functions

- Participate and communicate actively in program discussions and respond by set deadlines.
- Contribute to the development and implementation of the program plan for the SAFE species program.
- Vote in all elections and issues brought to a vote.
- Attend program meetings whenever possible.
- Communicate any problems or issues within the Steering Committee to the Program Leader.
- Monitor the progress on program plan activities.
- Contribute to and review the final draft of the program plan. This includes garnering information regarding conservation status and threats, identifying critical field conservation and public engagement actions to be implemented by AZA members and linking them to existing recovery or conservation plans, and working with partner organizations.
- Provide expert review of Conservation Grants Fund (CGF) proposals directed to the program.

- Provide and update general program information for the public pages of the AZA website upon request.

Members of the Steering Committee are encouraged to:

- Help existing and new incoming Program Partners become familiar and comfortable with their responsibilities, especially with respect to building sustainable populations.
- Identify, refine, support, and participate in actions identified in the program plan.
- Help to recruit applicants for vacant Program Leader positions.
- Solicit additional Steering Committee members as appropriate to reach the Steering Committee's ideal capacity (5-15 individuals).
- Solicit new Steering Committee members to replace Steering Committee members when their terms are completed.

Additional Suggested Positions (as needed)

Secretary

Eligibility Requirements

The Secretary is expected to:

- Be a paid employee of an institution or organization that is designated an active Program Partner, with a Statement of Institutional Support form submitted to AZA's CMWS Department.
- Be a subject matter expert.
- Uphold program business confidentiality.
- Have proficiency in word processing and spreadsheet programs, utilizing AZA web resources, the internet, and have email access.
- Have strong skills in organization, communication, and in establishing and maintaining effective working relationships with diverse groups of individuals.

Essential Position Functions

- Record, document, and use the AZA SAFE brand on all program business documentation and submit materials to the Program Leader for distribution to the Program Partners and in the program's [annual report](#).
- Communicate all programmatic changes for the program to the WCC Liaison and AZA staff.
- Participate in program's official meetings (in person if possible) and record minutes.
- Participate in program's working meetings (in person if possible).
- Respond to inquiries and requests for information regarding the program's expertise from the WCC, AZA staff, and Program Partners in a timely manner.
- Post all program issues held to a vote on the program's AZA Network workspace (if applicable).
- Tally, record, and archive all vote results and submit to the Program Leader to communicate to the Program Partners, and to include in the program's [annual report](#).
- Keep all program plan materials, Statement of Institutional Support forms, etc. updated, on file, and submitted in a timely manner to AZA's CMWS Department.

Treasurer

Eligibility Requirements

The Treasurer is expected to:

- Be a paid employee at an AZA member facility.
- Have an individual AZA membership.
- Uphold program business confidentiality.
- Have proficiency in word processing and spreadsheet programs, utilizing AZA web resources, the internet, and have email access.
- Have strong skills in organization, communication, and in establishing and maintaining effective working relationships with diverse groups of individuals.

Essential Position Functions

- Apply for and manage a [Dedicated Fund](#) in compliance with “AZA’s Management Guidelines for AZA Conservation Program Dedicated Funds”.
- Participate in program official meetings (in person if possible).
- Participate in program working meetings (in person if possible).
- Respond to inquiries and requests for information regarding the program’s expertise from the WCC, AZA staff, and Program Partners in a timely manner.

Program Partner Representatives

Eligibility Requirements

Each Program Partner Representative is expected to:

- Be an employee of the represented institution or organization.
- Uphold program business confidentiality.
- Have familiarity with the represented species/taxa. It is understood that there will not always be a staff member that specializes in a particular taxon or species. In these situations, the position should fall to the person on staff that is the most logical point of contact for the program.
- Have the ability to make decisions about the institution’s engagement in the program plan, or be able to communicate with those who have the ability to make decisions about commitments.
- Have the capability to disperse documents to the appropriate institution personnel.
- Submit a [Statement of Institutional Support](#) if representing an AZA member organization.

Essential Position Functions

- Communicate with and disseminate information to staff at institution of employment, including the institutional director.
- Respond to and fulfill inquiries by Program Leaders in a timely manner.
- Vote in program elections.
- Review and respond to program plans within the requested time frame. Ensure that any program plan recommendation disagreements are addressed with the Program Leader and other relevant parties in a timely manner.
- Consider participation in or support for activities included in the program plan.
- Complete and return surveys regarding progress on actions within the requested time frame.
- Communicate any contact information changes to the Program Leader.

External Expert Positions

Collaborators

Essential Position Functions

- Work with SAFE species program on an ad hoc basis to assist with implementation of program plan objectives and actions.
- Provide input on the program plan as requested.
- Provide expert advice regarding any topics, research proposals, and education materials related to the collaborator’s area of expertise.

Advisors

Essential Position Functions

- Advise the program in its efforts to develop, implement, and evaluate program goals, as applicable.
- Uphold the program’s business confidentiality.
- Provide input on the program plan as requested.
- Provide expert advice regarding any topics, research proposals, and inquiries related to the Advisor’s area of expertise.
- Assist in the development of education materials related to the Advisor’s area of expertise.
- Assist with the development of research projects related to the Advisor’s area of expertise.

- Assist the program in reviewing CGF grant proposals related to the Advisor's area of expertise as requested.

WCC Vice Chair of SAFE

Essential Position Functions

- Uphold SAFE species program confidentiality.
- Receive program proposals and assign WCC Liaisons; send WCC Liaisons draft program plans.
- Review program proposals as outlined in this Handbook, and submit recommendation to WCC chair for final decision.
- Review program plans, if necessary and appropriate, and provide feedback to WCC Liaison.
- In the case of filling a Program Leader vacancy, communicate confirmation of the new Program Leader to program's Steering Committee, all applicants for the Program Leader vacancy, and the AZA Conservation, Management, and Welfare Sciences Department.
- Provide general assistance to WCC Liaisons and Program Leaders regarding changes to program plans and accountability of Program Partners and Program Partner Representatives.
- Track eligibility and vacancies as Program Leaders change employers or the AZA member status changes at their institutions.
- Coordinate consideration of program plan extensions and other special requests by SAFE species programs.
- Work with WCC Liaisons and Program Leaders interested in dividing existing SAFE species programs into multiple programs, or combining multiple programs into a single one.

WCC Liaison

Essential Position Functions

- All Wildlife Conservation Committee members, except for the Chair, are assigned 1-2 SAFE programs with which to liaise.
- Attend (in-person or virtually) as many of the SAFE program meetings as possible.
- Provide mentoring, as appropriate, to the Program Leader on best practices in conservation, connect the Program Leader with other resources within the AZA community such as AZA Committees, etc.
- Uphold program business confidentiality.
- Respond to inquiries from Program Leaders during the development of the program plan, review the draft program plan as outlined in this Handbook, and provide feedback to the Program Leaders.
- Contact relevant AZA Board-level Committees and/or Animal Programs for program plan review, provide review checklist; and set a deadline within 4-6 weeks for feedback.
- Compile comments from all reviewers and provide a recommendation (approved/ pending approval with required revisions/ not approved) for the program plan to the WCC Vice Chair of SAFE to send to the WCC chair.
- Monitor the program's progress towards program plan publication; should the SAFE Program Leader request an extension, communicate such information to the WCC Vice Chair of SAFE and AZA Conservation Coordinator.
- Assess, through communications and informal evaluation, the program's progress and accountability for prioritizing, managing, and accomplishing its program plan
- Provide general assistance to the program's oversight and operation. Monitor and provide feedback as necessary regarding consistent communication with their Program Partners and collaborators, especially with respect to implementing actions identified in the program plan and assessing accountability of Program Partners and Program Partner Representatives.
- Review the annual report and communicate any issues identified to the WCC. Provide a verbal summary of the program, including accomplishments and/or concerns, during WCC meetings. Communicate any challenges or issues identified, with the Program Leader's awareness, to the WCC.

Appendix B: Worksheet for Developing a Logic Model

SAFE species programs may use this worksheet⁸ to develop a logic chain that maps Inputs to Impact for primary objectives. To promote critical and constructive conversations, the worksheet incorporates a step to identify assumptions being made. SAFE species programs should identify opportunities to engage and activate additional, diverse resources (i.e., inputs) from across the AZA community.

Terms					
Inputs	Activities, Actions, Tasks, or Strategies	Metrics or Outputs	Objectives or Outcomes	Assumptions	Impact (3-year goal and/or longer-term vision)
Definition/Description					
Resources allocated to the program	Applying the Inputs in an intervention (also called activity, task, action, or strategy)	What is measured, the change due to the Activities / Actions	What the program wishes to achieve in the short-term due to the effects of the outputs	If the Outcome / Objective was as successful as possible, would this mean that the Impact was achieved in part?	The effect we want to achieve because of the program
Guiding Questions					
Does the Outcome / Objective warrant the Input level? Could these resources be more effective if diverted to a different objective?	Can you visually depict a change over your 3-year plan after implementing your Action, OR a change from before to after implementation? What would a graph look like?	Does the Action map well to this? Should it be adjusted to better achieve the Outcome / Objective? Does the Metric map well? Should it be adjusted to better assess the Outcome / Objective?	What assumptions need to be tested to determine if Outcome / Objective are good indicators of impact? What evidence would tell you to increase the Activity? What evidence would tell you to decrease the Activity?	Is the long-term goal of the highest impact for the species? That is, if achieved, will it save the species? If not, what's a better goal?	

⁸ Developed by Anna Young, PhD, Otterbein University for SAFE Program Leaders Workshop, AZA Mid-Year Meeting, 24 March 2021.

Appendix C: Program Plan Templates – Samples

Program Plan Outline

- Table of contents
- [Conservation target](#)
- [Conservation status of taxon](#)
- [Recovery plan](#)
- [SAFE Species program vision and plan goal](#)
- [Program operational structure](#)
- [Objectives](#) (follow principles of SMART: Specific Measurable Achievable Relevant Time-bound)
- [Actions](#) (for each of the stated objective)
- [Recommended program plan reviewers](#)
- [Building on AZA community commitments](#)
 - [Status of taxon within the AZA community](#)
 - [AZA conservation and stakeholder engagement activities](#)
 - [AZA public awareness activities](#)
- Program Summary Table(s)
- References (if appropriate)

Sample Operational Structure Table

- Required elements listed; format may vary.

Role	Organization	Representative	Title	Contact Information (i.e., email, phone)
Program Leader(s)				
Steering Committee Members				
Program Partners				
Advisor(s)				
Field Partner(s)				

Sample Program Summary Table

- Required elements listed; additional examples provided. Format may vary.

Objective								
Stakeholder Group(s) Engaged	Activity	Metrics	Timeframe			Responsible Party		Budget
			E.g., Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	E.g., AZA Partner	Field Partner	