

AZA SAFE:  
American Turtle program  
Confiscations: Rapid Response

Midwest Turtle Workshop  
February 15, 2024

Dave Collins

Turtle Survival Alliance  
AZA SAFE: American Turtle Program Leader  
Co-Chair, CCITT Confiscation and Repatriation  
Working Group

[dcollins@turtlesurvival.org](mailto:dcollins@turtlesurvival.org)



# SAFE<sup>®</sup>

SAVING ANIMALS  
FROM EXTINCTION

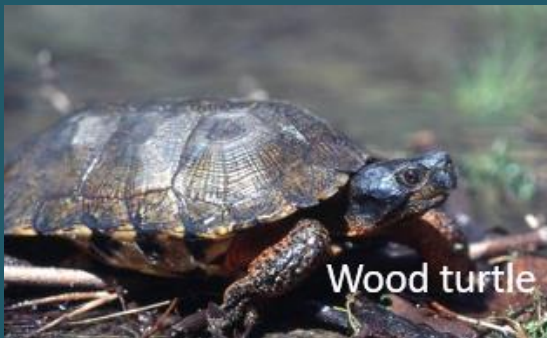
AMERICAN TURTLE



Bog turtle



Spotted turtle



Wood turtle



Box turtle



Blanding's turtle

What is



SAFE is the signature conservation program of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums

SAFE provides a framework to protect threatened animals that:

- Builds on established recovery plans and history of commitment.
- Prioritizes collaboration and partnerships.
- Implements strategic conservation and stakeholder engagement.

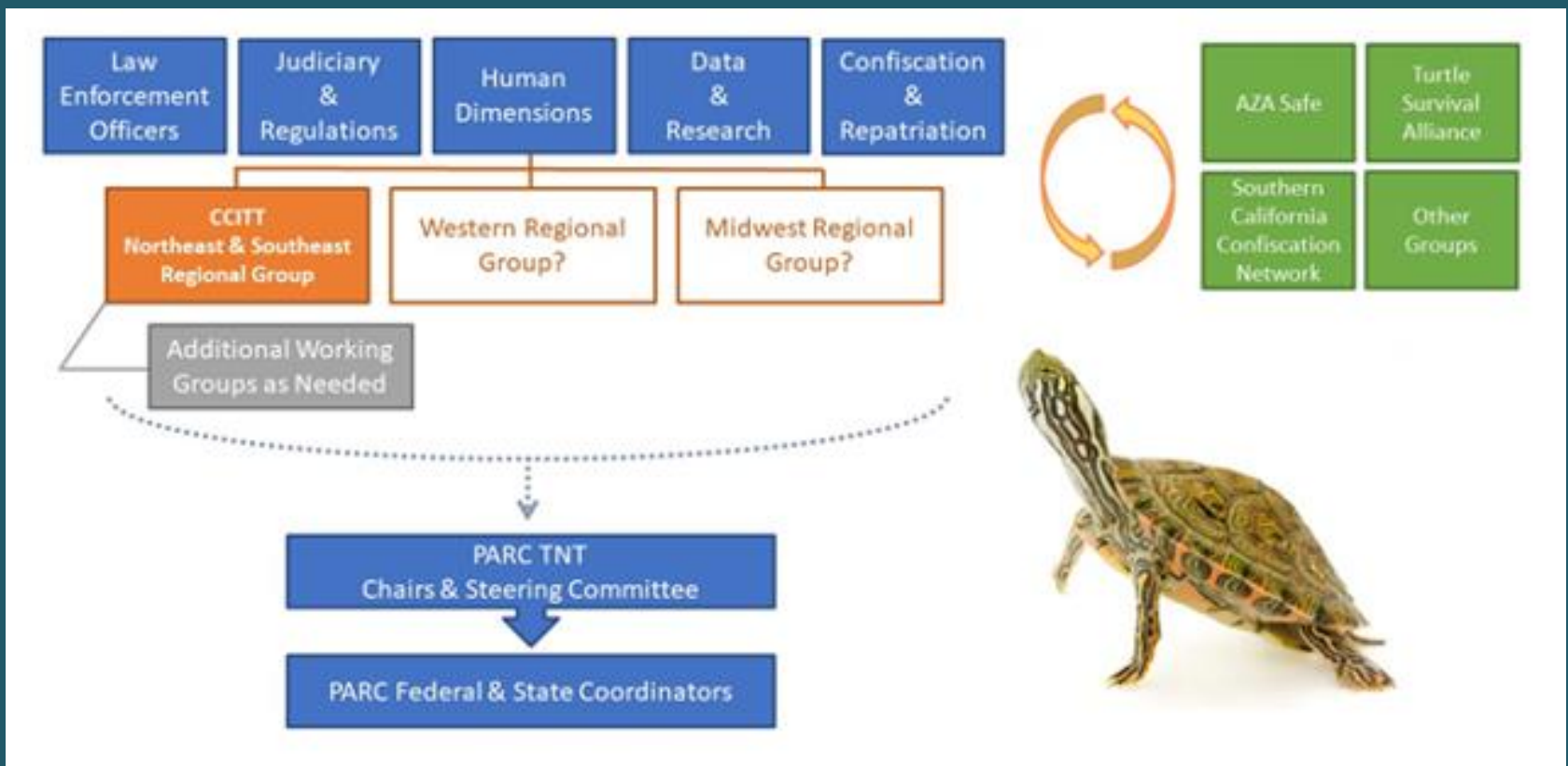
# American Turtle SAFE Partners

- 34 AZA partners
- 18 in the Midwest



# Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Turtle Networking Team - Collaborative to Combat the Illegal Trade in Turtles

## or PARC TNT-CCITT



# Goals

- Conserve and expand wild populations of spotted turtles, bog turtles, wood turtles, Blanding's turtles and box turtles.
- Assist law enforcement efforts to protect wild turtles.
- Develop a pathway for confiscated turtles to contribute to effective conservation efforts.

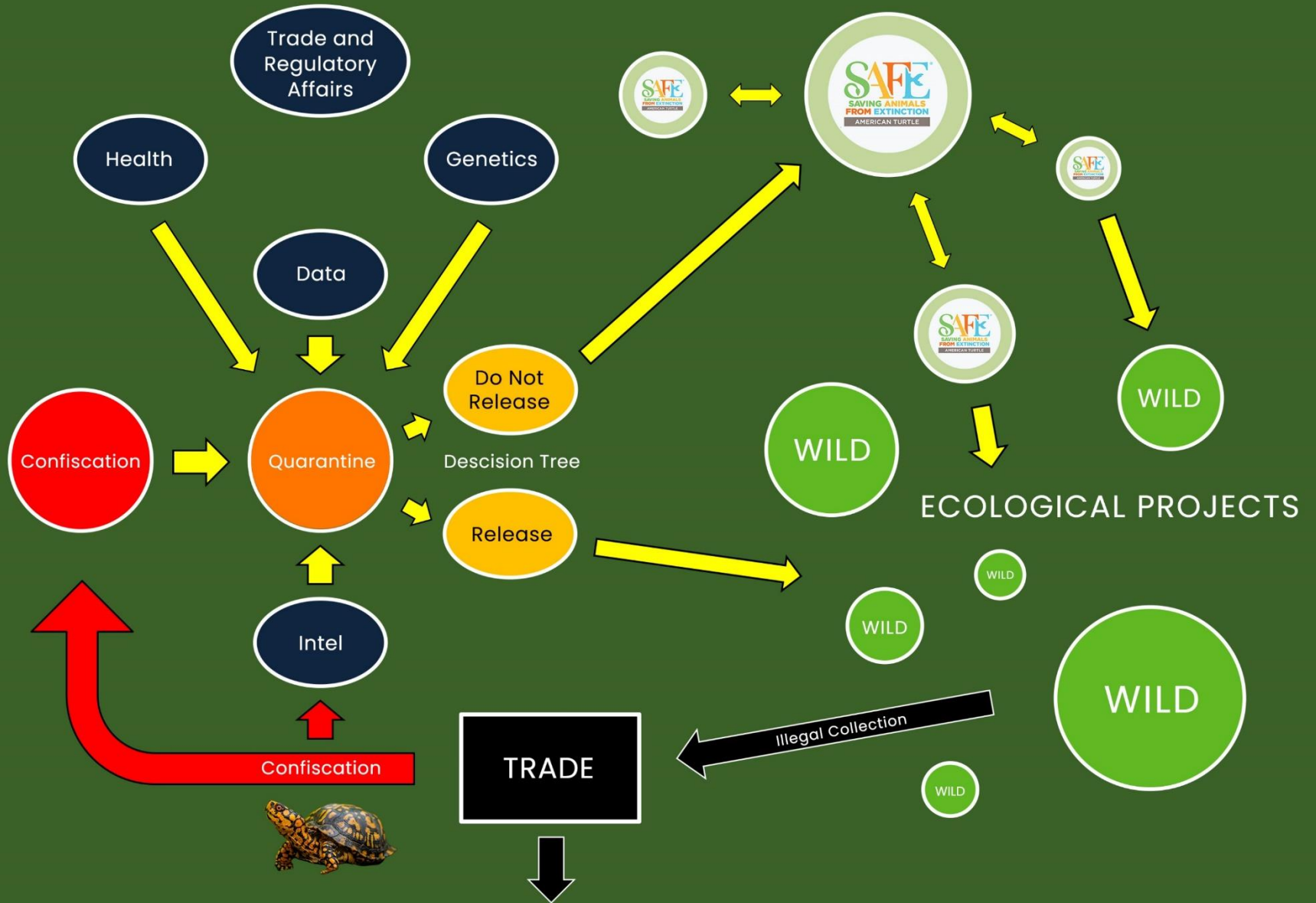
# American Turtle SAFE

## Key working groups

- Health and Welfare
- Genetics
- Confiscations: Rapid Response network
- Conservation Colonies
- Ecological Projects
- Schoolhouse Initiative

# FOUNDATION PROJECTS

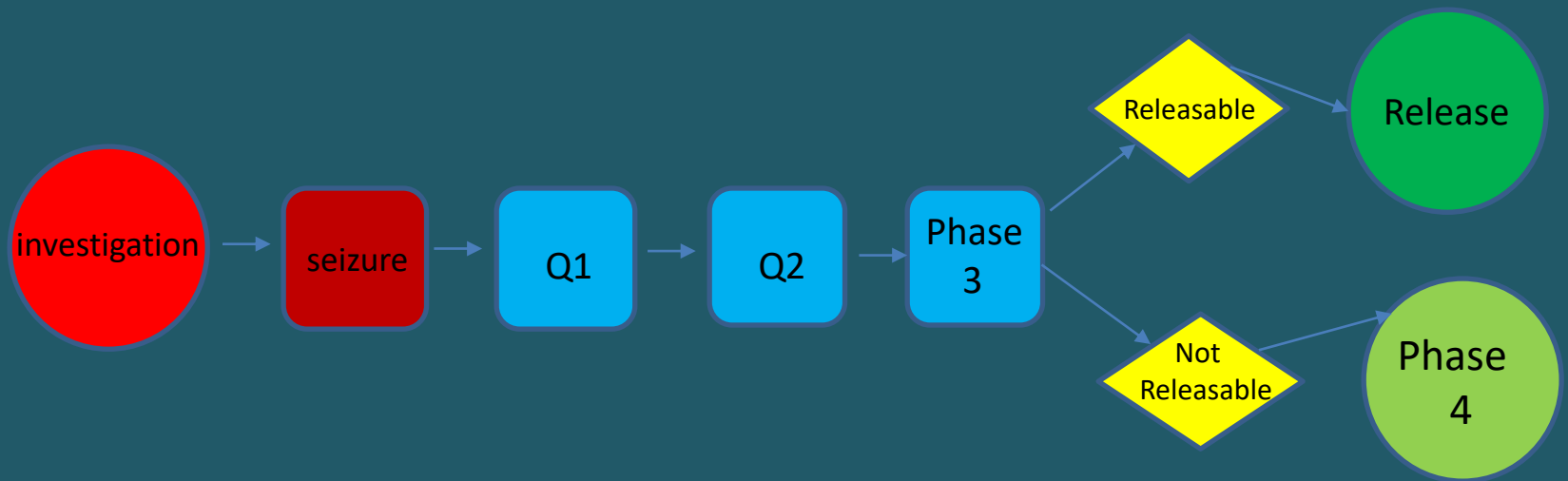
# CONSERVATION COLONIES



# Confiscations



# The Confiscation to Conservation Pathway



# The Confiscation to Conservation Pathway

Q1

## Quarantine

Day 1-30+

investigation

seizure

Q1

Q2

- High biosecurity
- Disease screening
- Genetic samples taken



# The Confiscation to Conservation Pathway

Q2

## Quarantine Day 31- Day 90+

investigation

seizure

Q1

Q2

- Disease screening results assessed
- Disease risk low
- More relaxed housing and environmental requirements

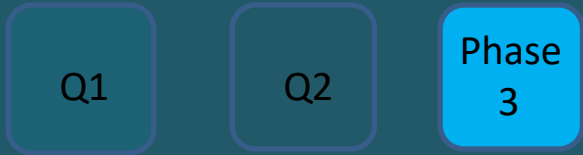


# The Confiscation to Conservation Pathway

Phase 3 Holding  
Day 91-Month 24



Reflection Riding Arboretum and Nature Center



- Cleared Quarantine
- Awaiting
  - Release from Chain of custody
  - Genetic results
- Final disposition



Bristol County Agricultural High School

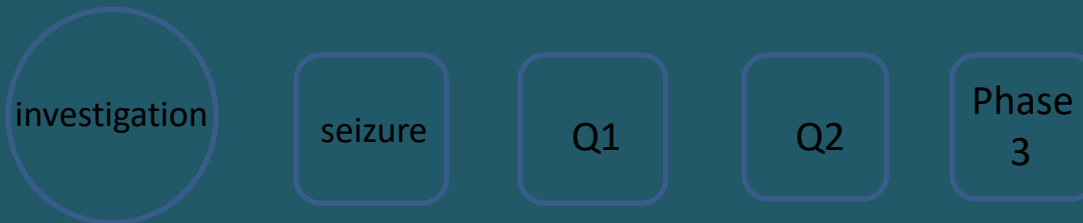


Savannah River Ecology Lab

# The Confiscation to Conservation Pathway

Release

Release



- State coordination
- Recipient site identification and analysis
- Post-release monitoring



Savannah River Ecology Lab

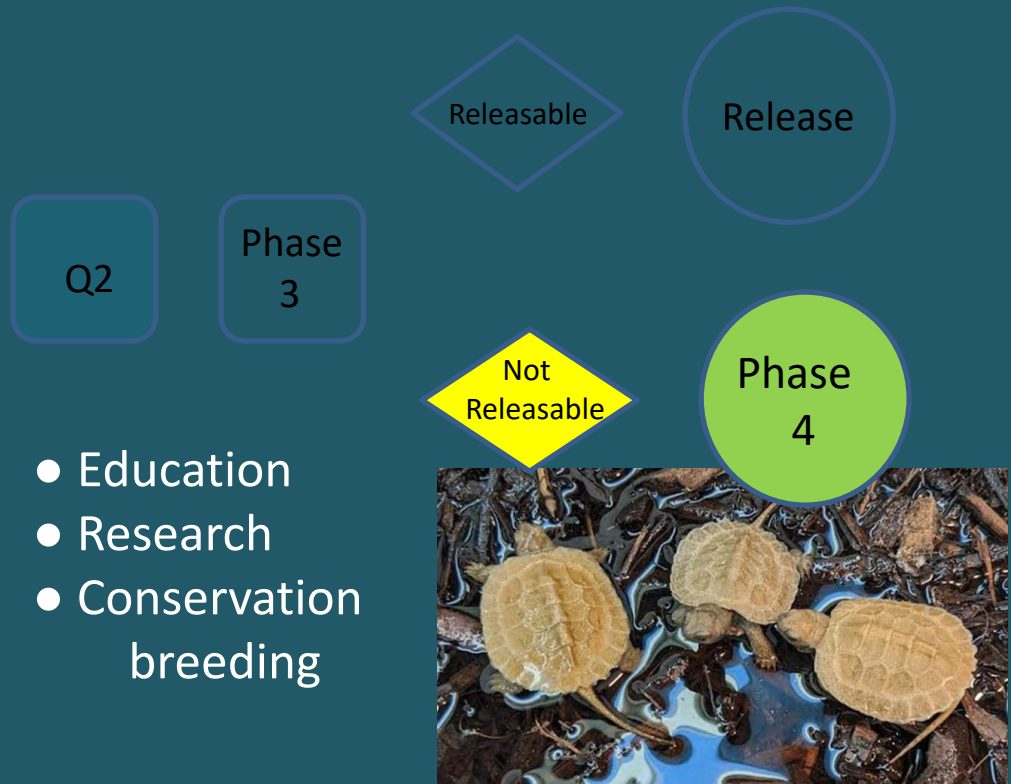
# The Confiscation to Conservation Pathway

Phase 4



Zoo Knoxville (Education)

## Permanent Placement



- Education
- Research
- Conservation breeding



Maryland Zoo (Conservation breeding)

# Funding needs

- Quarantine facilities
- Animal care (labor, food, supplies)
- Veterinary care and disease screening
- Building genetic databases and genetic testing
- Costs associated with repatriation



# Path Forward

- Expand capacity across all regions and all holding phases.
  - American Turtle SAFE Rapid Response Network.
  - AZA Wildlife Trafficking Alliance Confiscation Network
- Secure long-term funding.
- Coordinate turtle placement, testing and transfers.
- Expand genetic database and reduce cost and time to assignments.
- Expand disease research to include landscape level testing.

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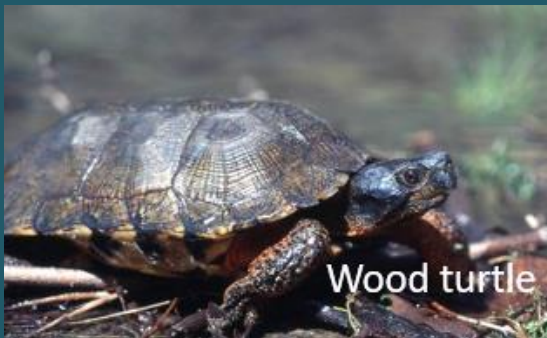
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