

# News Release



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## **SECRETARY KEMPTHORNE ANNOUNCES \$68 MILLION IN GRANTS TO SUPPORT LAND ACQUISITION AND CONSERVATION PLANNING FOR ENDANGERED SPECIES**

Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne today announced more than \$68 million in grants to 21 states and one territory to support conservation planning and acquisition of vital habitat for threatened and endangered species across the nation. The grants, awarded through the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund, will benefit species ranging from butterflies to bull trout.

"These grants present an invaluable opportunity for states and landowners to work together to protect habitat for threatened and endangered species," said Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne.

"Building conservation partnerships and developing cooperative conservation programs are important tools toward ensuring the survival of species and preventing species from becoming threatened."

Authorized under Section 6 of the Endangered Species Act, the cooperative endangered species fund this year will provide \$7.5 million through the Habitat Conservation Planning Assistance Grants Program, \$47 million through the Habitat Conservation Plan Land Acquisition Grants Program and \$13.9 million through the Recovery Land Acquisition Grants Program. These three programs were established to help reduce potential conflicts between the conservation of threatened and endangered species and land development and use.

Under the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) Land Acquisition Program, the Service provides grants to states or territories for land acquisition associated with approved HCPs. The grants are targeted to help landowners who want to undertake proactive conservation work on their lands to conserve imperiled species. HCPs are agreements between a landowner and the Service, allowing a landowner to undertake otherwise lawful activities on their property that may result in the incidental death, injury or harassment of a listed species, when that landowner agrees to conservation measures designed to minimize and mitigate the impact of those actions. HCPs may also be developed by a county or state to cover certain activities of all landowners within their jurisdiction and may address multiple species. There are more than 675 HCPs currently in effect covering nearly 600 species on approximately 42 million acres nationwide.

Among recipients of today's HCP Land Acquisition grants is the Plum Creek HCP – I-90 Wildlife Corridor, Phase III – Keechelus Ridge (Kittitas County, WA), receiving a four million dollar grant. The

Keechelus Ridge acquisition will acquire up to 670 acres along Interstate Highway 90, near Snoqualmie Pass, Washington. The acquisition will prevent development; protect habitat for northern spotted owl, marbled murrelet, gray wolf, grizzly bear, Canada lynx, and bull trout; and contribute to improved habitat connectivity between the north and south Cascade Mountains for another 160 species including bald eagle, wolverine, marten, and Pacific giant salamander.

The HCP Planning Assistance Program provides grants to states and territories to support the development of HCPs through funding of baseline surveys and inventories, document preparation, outreach, and similar planning activities. For example, the Washington and Oregon Walla Walla Basin Bi-State HCP (Walla Walla and Columbia Counties, WA and Umatilla County, OR) received over \$547,000. This grant will fund the sixth and final year of an ongoing planning process for the Walla Walla Basin HCP. The HCP development process will result in benefits to listed bull trout and mid-Columbia River summer steelhead by addressing municipal and agricultural water issues in a forum with several State and local entities in Oregon and Washington.

The Recovery Land Acquisition Grants Program provides funds to states and territories to acquire habitat for endangered and threatened species with approved recovery plans. Habitat acquisition to secure long term protection is often an essential element of a comprehensive recovery effort for a listed species. One of this year's grants will provide \$1,631,132 to acquire and permanently protect habitat on 20 acres of privately owned lands in Hawaii. The property acquisition is located at the mouth of Kilauea stream at Kahili beach and is adjacent to the Kilauea Point National Wildlife Refuge. The area contains habitat occupied by the federally protected Hawaiian goose, Hawaiian stilt, Hawaiian coot, Hawaiian gallinule, and Hawaiian duck and the Hawaiian hoary bat.

For a complete list of the 2007 grant awards for these programs (Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number 15.615), please visit the Service's Endangered Species Grants webpage: <http://endangered.fws.gov/grants/section6/index.html>.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System which encompasses 547 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 63 fishery resource offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

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