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News Release



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Fish and Wildlife Service Announces \$13.4 Million in Grants to Washington to Support Land Acquisition and Conservation Planning for Endangered Species

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today announced more than \$13.4 million in grants in Washington State to support conservation planning and acquisition of vital habitat for threatened and endangered fish, wildlife and plants. The grants are part of a \$57.8 million national grant package announced by Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar.

Authorized by Section 6 of the Endangered Species Act, the competitive grants enable States to work with private landowners, conservation groups and other agencies to initiate conservation planning efforts and acquire and protect habitat to support the conservation of threatened and endangered species.

This year, the cooperative endangered species fund provided approximately \$7.6 million through the Habitat Conservation Planning Assistance Grants Program, \$36 million through the Habitat Conservation Plan Land Acquisition Grants Program, and \$14.1 million through the Recovery Land Acquisition Grants Program nationally. The three programs were established to help avoid potential conflicts between the conservation of threatened and endangered species and land development and use.

The Washington grants announced today include more than \$741,000 in Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) Planning Assistance Grants, \$12 million in HCP Land Acquisition Grants, and more than \$747,000 in Recovery Lands Acquisition Grants.

Under the HCP Land Acquisition Grants Program, the Service provides grants to states or territories for land acquisition associated with approved HCPs. The grants are targeted to help landowners who volunteer to conserve imperiled species on their lands. Washington's grants for 2009 include:

Plum Creek HCP – Okanogan-Similkameen Watershed, Phase 2 (Okanogan County) \$4,000,000. This project will secure approximately 7,900 acres of two ecologically critical animal movement corridors, one for wide-ranging carnivores such as grizzly bear, gray wolf, Canada lynx, and wolverine and their ungulate prey and the other linking the grassland/shrub-steppe habitat of southern British Columbia with the shrub-steppe habitat of the Columbia Basin. The acquisition will provide benefits for at least 48 species State or federally listed as threatened or endangered in Washington State, the U.S., and Canada.

Plum Creek HCP – Methow Watershed, Phase 6 (Okanogan County) \$2,000,000. This phase of the partnership will secure up to 870 upland acres and stream frontage protecting landscape corridors. Protection of these low elevation mature conifer and riparian forest habitats contributes to the State’s most successful acquisition effort with almost 20,000 acres already protected. The Methow Watershed supports a unique and diverse assemblage of fish and wildlife species and this project will benefit grizzly bears, gray wolves, lynx, and salmon.

Cedar River Watershed HCP – I-90 Wildlife Corridor, Phase IV (Kittitas and King County) \$6,000,000. Funding for this project will acquire 100 acres of habitat along Interstate Highway 90, near Snoqualmie Pass, Washington. The acquisition will protect habitat for northern spotted owl, gray wolf, grizzly bear, Canada lynx, and bull trout. In addition, it will also contribute to habitat protection and improved ecological connectivity for 60 species of terrestrial vertebrates, including wolverine, marten, and Pacific giant salamander, by enhancing linkages between the north and south Cascade Mountains along the I-90 corridor. Acquisition and match lands will add habitat protection and connectivity to the Cedar River Watershed.

The HCP Planning Assistance Grants 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. This year, Washington was awarded one grant to help plan its statewide Wildlife Area HCP.

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Wildlife Area HCP (Statewide, all 39 counties) \$741,034. This grant funds the fifth year of an HCP process for the State’s wildlife areas covering a total of approximately 900,000 acres. The HCP will offer benefits to more than 50 listed and at-risk species and land users by providing certainty that land management activities meet Federal species protection requirements. Listed species that will benefit include but are not limited to: pygmy rabbit, western snowy plover, northern spotted owl, marbled murrelet, bull trout, Chinook salmon, steelhead, Oregon silverspot, and golden paintbrush. Unlisted species include greater sage-grouse, burrowing owl, Oregon spotted frog, Larch Mountain salamander, coho salmon, Mardon skipper butterfly, and Taylor’s checkerspot butterfly.

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.

San Juan Islands *Castilleja* Conservation Project (San Juan County) \$747,000. This funding will enable the San Juan County Land Bank, as a subgrantee to Washington Department of Natural Resources, to protect up to 41 acres of habitat supporting the threatened golden paintbrush (*Castilleja levisecta*). This project will directly contribute to golden paintbrush recovery by protecting an existing golden paintbrush plant population that can be managed and augmented. The project is also expected to benefit two rare butterflies, the island marble and Taylor’s checkerspot.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit <www.fws.gov>