



News Release

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SECRETARY KEMPTHORNE ANNOUNCES \$67 MILLION IN GRANTS TO SUPPORT LAND ACQUISITION AND CONSERVATION PLANNING FOR ENDANGERED SPECIES

Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne today announced more than \$67 million in grants to 27 states to support conservation planning and acquisition of vital habitat for threatened and endangered fish, wildlife and plants. The grants, awarded through the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund, will benefit species ranging from orchids to bull trout that are found across the United States. Arizona will receive two grants.

“These grants are incredibly important tools to conserve threatened and endangered species,” said Secretary of Interior Dirk Kempthorne. “Our ability to successfully conserve habitat for imperiled species depends on long-term partnerships and voluntary landowner participation. These grants provide the means for States to work with landowners and communities to conserve habitat and foster conservation stewardship efforts for future generations.”

Authorized by Section 6 of the Endangered Species Act, the 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.

The cooperative endangered species fund this year provides \$7.5 million through the Habitat Conservation Planning Assistance Grants Program, \$46 million through the Habitat Conservation Plan Land Acquisition Grants Program and \$13.9 million through the Recovery Land Acquisition Grants Program. The three programs were established to help reduce potential conflicts between the conservation of threatened and endangered species and land development and use.

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. The City of Tucson will receive \$252,829 to continue developing two habitat conservation plans for 19 species in the greater Tucson area (Avra Valley and Greater Southlands/Santa Cruz River Corridor). City of Tucson, in collaboration with the Arizona Game and Fish Department, began developing a multi-species HCP in 2003; this effort has since expanded into the development of 2 multi-species HCPs. Covered species in the planning areas include the cactus ferruginous pygmy-owl, lesser long-nosed bat, Pima Pineapple cactus, western yellow-billed cuckoo, Chiricahua leopard frog, Gila topminnow, and others. Advisory groups to the City of Tucson represent local governmental jurisdictions and areas of technical expertise such as natural resource conservation, civil engineering, and transportation planning.

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. The Arizona Game and Fish Department will receive \$750,000 to continue the Coal Mine Spring acquisition in Santa Cruz County. This grant will enable the acquisition of up to 874 acres for the benefit of the Gila topminnow, Mexican spotted owl, western yellow-billed cuckoo, and lesser long-nosed bat. The acquisition is the third phase of property acquisition in Coal Mine Spring, bringing the complete acquisition to 4,376 acres and providing critical protection to an existing population of Gila topminnow. Phase III complements the adjacent State park natural area and provides a buffer to the acquisitions in Phases I and II.

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 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 own jurisdiction and may address multiple species. There are more than 650 HCPs currently in effect covering 600 separate species on approximately 41 million acres.

For a complete list of the 2006 grant awards for these programs (Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number 15.615), see the Service's Endangered Species Grants home page at <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 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources 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 Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies. Visit the Service's website at <http://www.fws.gov>.