



**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**

## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **SNAKE RIVER FISH AND WILDLIFE OFFICE**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN FOR NORTHERN IDAHO GROUND SQUIRREL TO BE IMPLEMENTED IN ADAMS COUNTY**

*Conservation actions on private land will benefit rare species*

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) announced the approval of a Low-effect Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and an incidental take permit for the development of a lot in Adams County, Idaho.

The purpose of the HCP is to minimize human disturbance to the northern Idaho ground squirrel due to development-related effects on property owned by Duane and Darlene Schwisow in Price Valley. The HCP includes a 25-year incidental take permit, allowing for incidental harm or injury to ground squirrels from ground disturbance from the construction of an RV site; installation of utility, septic and well systems; and domestic pet harassment.

Price Valley supports one of the more robust populations of the northern Idaho ground squirrel, a species listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (Act). Current population estimates for the Price Valley complex, which includes the applicant's property and adjacent state and private land, is upwards of 150 ground squirrels. Small, disjunct populations of the species occur along Price Valley Road, beginning near Highway 95 and extending north to Payette National Forest lands.

Scientists believe that the northern Idaho ground squirrel has been impacted by habitat fragmentation and loss of suitable meadow habitat due to forest encroachment and vegetation changes, development, shooting and poisoning, predation, and competition from other ground squirrels such as the Columbian ground squirrel.

A key provision of the HCP is the implementation of a conservation strategy that includes measures to avoid and minimize incidental take; annual monitoring by the Service and Idaho Department of Fish and Game; population reporting requirements; and badger/Columbian ground squirrel control actions if necessary. To mitigate for the temporary loss of suitable habitat due to development activities, the applicants will replant temporarily disturbed areas with native plants.

Jeff Foss, Field Supervisor of the Service's Snake River Fish and Wildlife Office said, "The Service applauds the commitment to the conservation of the northern Idaho ground squirrel that the Schwisows and other Adams and Valley County private landowners have demonstrated. It is through efforts such as these that this imperiled species will continue to rebound."

For more information about private landowner conservation, contact the Service's Snake River Fish and Wildlife Office at (208) 378-5243.

*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, 64 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 Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.*

*For more information about the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, visit our homepage at <http://www.fws.gov>*