



# United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
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## Vernal Pool Recovery Implementation Team Charter

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This charter identifies the background, mission, goals, and general organization and structure for the Vernal Pool Recovery Implementation Team (Recovery Implementation Team). The charter may be updated at any point in the future by the Recovery Implementation Team or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This document is intended to facilitate recovery efforts for vernal pool species by providing structure for the Recovery Implementation Team. It is not intended to place any undue administrative burden on recovery efforts, and if this occurs as operations of the Recovery Implementation Team proceed then the charter should be updated to better support recovery of the vernal pool species.

### BACKGROUND

The *Recovery Plan for Vernal Pool Ecosystems of California and Southern Oregon* (Recovery Plan) was published by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) in 2005. This Recovery Plan identified 33 species of plants and animals that are endangered, threatened, or species of concern that occur exclusively or primarily within the vernal pool ecosystems of California and southern Oregon. The majority of historical vernal pool ecosystems have been destroyed or altered over the last two centuries by urban development and agricultural conversion. Vernal pool species continue to be threatened by habitat loss, degradation, and fragmentation; small population sizes; drought and climate change; lack of management or inappropriate management; and invasive species.

The Recovery Plan includes a broad set of recovery criteria that include habitat protection; adaptive habitat management, restoration, and monitoring; status surveys; research; and participation and outreach. Specifically, the Recovery Plan recommends protection of 80–100% of known occurrences of the 33 vernal pool species and protection of 85–95% of suitable habitat for each species within designated Core Recovery Areas. To date, conservation efforts have protected a large amount of vernal pool habitat and species occurrences throughout various parts of California and southern Oregon. However, the 33 vernal pool species remain endangered, threatened, or species of concern and much more habitat needs to be protected to fully achieve the recovery criteria outlined in the Recovery Plan.

### MISSION

The Recovery Implementation Team provides a forum for all stakeholders to collaboratively identify, develop, review, and communicate conservation actions, research, education, and management strategies that promote the recovery and long-term viability of the listed vernal pool species and their habitat. Participation of many groups, including other federal, state, and local

agencies; conservation organizations; private groups; private landowners; and interested stakeholders will be essential to achieving the recovery goals for the covered species. The Recovery Implementation Team will oversee recovery efforts throughout California and southern Oregon and will establish several Regional Working Groups to guide these efforts at a more local level. The Recovery Implementation Team will focus on range-wide recovery actions, range-wide coordination, and range-wide recovery related topics that are applicable to vernal pool species and ecosystems throughout California and southern Oregon. Regional Working Groups will be focused on local recovery efforts including working with local partners and landowners to protect, manage, and conserve the vernal pool species and habitat within their regions.

## **PURPOSE**

### **Recovery Implementation Team**

1. Coordinate Recovery Actions

In close partnership with the Service, coordinate implementation of the Recovery Plan. Remain apprised of various vernal pool conservation activities occurring throughout California and southern Oregon and identify recovery criteria or other recovery needs that are not being addressed. Organize events or forums for stakeholders throughout California and southern Oregon to share knowledge and strategize how to most effectively achieve recovery of, or prevent the need to list, the Recovery Plan's 33 vernal pool species.

2. Establish Partnerships to Further Recovery

Develop collaborative relationships among stakeholders throughout California and southern Oregon. Act as a network to connect conservation professionals and other stakeholders, including across regions.

3. Identify Conservation Priorities to Achieve Recovery

Identify highest priority conservation actions or research needs that are relevant to vernal pool ecosystems and species that span multiple vernal pool regions throughout California and southern Oregon. Examples include identifying priority lands for protection, management needs, research on climate change impacts on vernal pools, range-wide habitat mapping, and range-wide genetic studies for species that occur throughout multiple regions.

4. Provide Input to the Service to Achieve Recovery

Provide updates to the Service about actions being pursued by the Recovery Implementation Team and the Regional Working Groups. Provide recommendations to the Service regarding conservation priorities, updates to the Recovery Plan (*e.g.*, Vernal Pool Region or Core Area boundaries, species to add or remove from specific Core Areas, alternative ways to achieve species recovery based on new information), or ways that the Service can facilitate recovery efforts.

### **Regional Working Groups**

1. Establish Partnerships to Further Recovery

Develop collaborative relationships among stakeholders within the region. Determine the most strategic ways to conduct public outreach to private landowners.

2. Identify Conservation Priorities for the Region to Achieve Recovery

Identify highest priority conservation actions or research needs that are specific to the region. Examples include identifying priority lands for protection, identifying appropriate

sites for species reintroduction efforts, local management needs, monitoring, local habitat mapping, genetic studies, or other research needs.

3. Promote Regional Conservation, Research, and Education to Achieve Recovery  
Collaborate to identify and secure funding for habitat protection, management, research needs, and public education in the region. Identify private landowners willing to voluntarily protect vernal pool habitat on their lands (via conservation easement, fee title sale, or other mechanisms), provide them the necessary information, identify appropriate funding sources, and connect them with conservation professionals and other resources to help facilitate land preservation. Coordinate with public agencies to identify appropriate strategies for protecting and managing vernal pool habitat on public lands. Promote public education efforts to strengthen support for the conservation of vernal pool species and ecosystems.
4. Coordinate with the Recovery Implementation Team  
Provide regular updates to the Recovery Implementation Team about conservation actions being pursued by the Working Group, threats or issues that have arisen in the region, and recommendations regarding conservation priorities, research needs, or outreach actions that would benefit the region.

## **ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE**

The Recovery Implementation Team and each Regional Working Group will be composed of members from a diverse array of stakeholder groups relevant to each team. The Service will be the entity in charge of providing official invitation letters to prospective members, but in general it is anticipated that all interested stakeholders will be able to participate. The size of each team should be managed to facilitate the teams' abilities to achieve their recovery mission and goals; teams should be large enough to facilitate collaboration between a broad array of stakeholders while remaining small enough to stay efficient and effective in carrying out their missions.

### **Recovery Implementation Team**

The Recovery Implementation Team will meet regularly to identify purpose-driven goals, evaluate conservation needs, and to share information regarding conservation, management, and research. Meeting frequency will be determined by members at the first gathering and adjusted as needed to meet the Team's recovery mission and goals.

The Recovery Implementation Team will be facilitated by a leadership team representing the group's diverse membership. The leadership team shall oversee the following:

- Scheduling and facilitating group meetings.
- Establishing Regional Working Groups as needed.
- Ensuring that the Recovery Implementation Team and Regional Working Groups have the appropriate membership sizes and diversity of stakeholder involvement needed to be efficient and effective.
- Provide members of the Recovery Implementation Team the direction and guidance needed to achieve the Team's goals.

The leadership team shall consist of 4–5 members with the following roles. The Recovery Implementation Team may decide to add additional leadership roles if needed, in which case those roles will replace the Member At Large position(s) to keep the leadership team to a manageable size. All roles except for Service Liaison will be filled by nomination from the

Team's general membership, with appropriate voting procedures if needed, and will serve for one-year terms. The same person may fill the same role for multiple years if nominated each year but should not do so for more than three consecutive years. The leadership team will oversee organizing the yearly nomination process.

1. Team Chairperson

This role will be the main person in charge of organizing the Recovery Implementation Team and keeping the Team moving forward and making steady progress. The Chairperson oversees facilitating Team meetings and will prepare agendas for each meeting along with help from the rest of the leadership team. The Chairperson is a regular member of the Recovery Implementation Team and is not an appointed decision-maker for the Team, however their vision and organizational support will be vital to ensuring that the Team meets its goals.

2. Team Vice-Chairperson

This role will support the Chairperson and fill the role of Chairperson if the Chairperson is absent or if that position is vacant. The Vice-Chairperson is a regular member of the Recovery Implementation Team and is not an appointed decision-maker for the Team, however their vision and organizational support will be vital to ensuring that the Team meets its goals.

3. Service Liaison

This role will be filled by an employee from the Service's Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office, which is the lead field office for the Recovery Plan. The Service Liaison is tasked with keeping Service staff apprised of the discussions and actions of the Recovery Implementation Team, communicating recommendations or needs from the Recovery Implementation Team to the Service, providing input and guidance to the leadership team on behalf of the Service, and generally fostering a positive working relationship and good communication between the Team and the Service. The Service Liaison is not a designated decision-maker on behalf of the Service. If decisions need to be made by the Service, the Service Liaison will discuss proposals with the appropriate level of Service leadership. The Service Liaison is a regular member of the Recovery Implementation Team and is not an appointed decision-maker for the Team. More than one Service employee may participate on the Recovery Implementation Team, but only one employee needs to be designated as the official Service Liaison.

4. Minute Taker

This role will oversee recording minutes at each Recovery Implementation Team meeting and making the minutes available to all Team members. As a member of the leadership team, the Minute Taker will also provide general organizational support, such as helping to prepare meeting agendas.

5. Member At Large

This role will be a general member of the leadership team and help the leadership team provide organizational support and vision and direction to the Recovery Implementation Team. It is not required that this position be filled if there is not interest from the general membership of the Recovery Implementation Team. However, this role exists to both provide an opportunity for members to join the leadership team without committing to the tasks of the other leadership roles and to provide additional support to the Chairperson if they feel that additional leadership team members would be helpful. In addition, having Members At Large may assist in ensuring that the leadership team is composed of members representing a diversity of stakeholders.

## **Regional Working Groups**

The number of Regional Working Groups and their geographic scope will be determined by the Recovery Implementation Team. The Recovery Plan generally discusses forming Regional Working Groups that comprise each of the 16 Vernal Pool Regions designated in the Recovery Plan, though Recovery Action 5.2 clarifies that two or more Vernal Pool Regions may be combined into a single Regional Working Group. The number of groups should be limited to avoid overburdening stakeholders whose interests span several vernal pool regions and to simplify communication between the Working Groups, the Recovery Implementation Team, and the Service. Still, the geographic scope of each Working Group should be narrow enough to facilitate the creation and feasibility of region-specific goals.

Regional Working Groups will meet regularly to identify purpose-driven goals, evaluate conservation needs, and to share information regarding conservation, management, and research relevant to their region. Meeting frequency will be determined by members at the first gathering and adjusted as needed to meet each Working Group's goals. The leadership structure of the Regional Working Groups may be more flexible than the Recovery Implementation Team, though the Groups may elect to adopt a similar leadership team structure to that described above. As much as possible, each Working Group should strive to include a Service Liaison from the Ecological Services Field Office(s) that overlap the region. More than one Service employee may participate on each Regional Working Group, but only one employee needs to be designated as the official Service Liaison.