

Project Planning

Program Overview

The Project Planning Program provides our Federal, State, and local partners with biological expertise to support many different types of development and conservation projects across the country. Project Planning is the “environmental streamlining” arm of the Service and plays a central role in advancing energy, transportation, water, and restoration projects – all Administration priorities. The unit’s mission is to help expeditiously create “win-win” projects for economic development and fish and wildlife conservation. Our 300+ biologists provide customer service from more than 80 Ecological Services field offices across the country which helps partners develop projects that meet their economic development needs and conserve natural resources simultaneously. We are unique because our ecosystem-level coordination helps conserve all trust resources – migratory birds, fisheries, threatened and endangered species, and marine mammals.

Experience has shown that we maximize the number of successes by working with our partners as early as possible in the planning process and being a key player in every phase of development. The up-front, collaborative approach safeguards against regulatory surprises and court-ordered setbacks caused by outside interests late in the planning process. To this end, we have increased focus on public and private partnerships, adding the value of biological assistance to development teams. Our active involvement in the White House Task Forces on Energy and Transportation Streamlining is merely one example.

The technical assistance Project Planning provides to partners supports the Department of the Interior’s Strategic Plan goals to *Improve the Health of Watersheds, Landscapes, and Marine Resources*; *Sustain Biological Communities*; and *Provide for the Use of Resources in an Environmentally Responsible and Cost Efficient Manner*. Project Planning has broadly supported these goals for decades, but its mandate has clearly grown and changed since the middle part of the 20th Century.

Use of Cost and Performance Information

Project Planning has completed several actions to collect and review cost and performance information and target resources to the highest priorities.

- ***White House Task Force on Energy Project Streamlining:*** To advance energy projects and conserve resources simultaneously, Project Planning continues to shift responsibilities of selected experts to focus on this streamlining effort. In particular, staff from Washington, DC, and Salt Lake City, Utah, have served extended details to assist the nationwide initiative.
- ***New Performance Measures—Digital Tracking System:*** In FY04, Project Planning implemented new performance measures that tie our work to the Department’s Strategic Plan and more clearly describe the results of our technical assistance. We are now developing a web-based, nationwide tracking system to increase efficiency and foster consistency in reporting. This new data will be used to evaluate future management and budgetary decisions.
- ***Transfer Funding Partnerships to Streamline Transportation Projects:*** To more efficiently meet the mission of the Service, Project Planning continues to build upon its partnership with the Department of Transportation, receiving some transfer funds to hire biologists who can focus exclusively on critical transportation projects, in concert with the President’s Executive Order on Transportation Streamlining.
- ***Activity Based Costing:*** This year, Project Planning adopted new ABC codes for Federal Energy Regulatory Commission hydropower licensing to more effectively track costs associated with supporting municipal and privately owned dams. Next year, the program plans to add new activities to track the costs for supporting other priority projects. We will then have better alignment with performance and cost information, allowing the program to allocate funds most effectively.

In support of the Department's Strategic Plan, the program has worked with Department and Service staff over the past two years to create and refine new performance measures that more clearly describe the program's on-the-ground contribution to fish and wildlife conservation. Project Planning is taking the next critical step to measure performance this year, creating an integrated, web-based performance tracking system to increase efficiency and foster reporting consistency in all 80+ Ecological Services field offices.

Targeting Our Biological Assistance – A Focus on Wetlands

Project Planning provides biological information to help conserve a variety of fish and wildlife and their habitats, but it also has a special focus on wetlands. This emphasis supports the President's renewed commitment to wetlands conservation (Earth Day 2004). The program is playing a key role in the effort to meet the Administration's net gain goal, and is one reason why the nationwide rate of wetlands loss is diminishing.

Three fundamental activities, which have important wetland implications, help meet the Department's strategic goals of: (1) advanced planning and early consultation during the environmental review of Federal projects, supported by the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act and National Environmental Policy Act; (2) biological assistance during the planning for projects that affect wetlands and waterways, as directed by the Clean Water Act and guided by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act; and (3) environmental coordination during hydropower licensing, as outlined by the Federal Power Act and Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

Conserving Wetlands to Achieve Net Gain – National Wetland Mitigation Action Plan

Project Planning's involvement with the Army Corps of Engineers Clean Water Act Section 404 program is central to the Administration's National Wetland Mitigation Action Plan. The plan identifies 13 tasks designed to improve compensatory mitigation, and seeks to highlight the flexibility available for selecting sites and approaches that maximize resource benefits. Among the 13 tasks are developing guidance for on-site/off-site and in-kind/out-of-kind mitigation; creating a model mitigation checklist; and outlining key information related to performance standards, vegetated buffers, and preservation.

Targeting Domestic Energy and Transportation Needs

We now play a key role in retrofitting dams with new technologies to maximize energy output and minimize wildlife impacts, helping return important fisheries to some of their historic spawning grounds. We also help outline and implement other energy projects needed to keep the American economy strong. Projects include tapping Alaska's wealth of natural gas and developing effective ways to transport it to key markets, while taking care to conserve fish and wildlife. Other examples include working with partners to develop wind energy on and off Federal lands and avoid key migratory bird flyways, and plan coal-bed methane projects in the Mountain West that fully consider fish and wildlife impacts.

In addition, we work in partnership to develop the highway, navigation, and other transportation infrastructure that underpins our everyday lives, with a focus on minimizing impacts to fish and wildlife. Project Planning also helps identify positive solutions to water issues, providing the public with the science needed to strike the balance between conservation and the increasing needs from cities, suburbs, and farmland. Project Planning's technical assistance is also helping open the door to a new and exciting epoch in resource conservation, one now merely in its infancy: habitat restoration at the ecosystem scale. To this end, Project Planning is helping develop and implement some of the largest restoration projects in history, from the Everglades, to Coastal Louisiana, to the Upper Mississippi River, to the Penobscot River in Maine.

Partnership on the Penobscot – A “Win-Win” for Conservation and Energy

Overlooking the Veazie Dam on the banks of the Penobscot River in June 2004, Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton joined Maine Governor John Baldacci and other leaders of an historic Maine partnership in signing a “milestone” agreement that will remove two dams on the Penobscot River to restore fisheries while maintaining hydropower production. The Penobscot River Restoration Trust, a newly formed nonprofit, will seek approval to decommission a third dam and construct a state-of-the-art fish bypass around it. The PPL Cooperation in turn will increase power generation on six other dams on the Penobscot and its tributaries. Project Planning’s biological assistance and early consultation were instrumental in achieving this heralded success.

Secretary Norton lauded the Federal, State, Tribal, industry, and public effort, stating “The Penobscot Model is a partnership model for the 21st century of how environmental protection, energy production and economic opportunities can go hand-in-hand when we all communicate and work together.” The agreement opens 500 miles of the Penobscot River, probably the most significant step to restore Atlantic salmon in the past century, considering that this river has the largest remaining population in the nation. In addition, the utility will recapture substantially all of the energy lost in removing the two dams by increasing production on other dams and improving efficiency – truly a “win-win” for conservation and energy.

Project Planning’s Priority Projects:

- **Energy Projects**, including oil, gas, and hydropower as emphasized by the White House Task Force on Energy Streamlining, E.O. 13212, and the National Energy Plan
- **Highway Projects** and other critical transportation projects identified by the White House Task Force on Transportation Streamlining and E.O. 13274
- **Water Supply Projects**, thereby supporting the Department’s Water 2025 Initiative
- **Restoration Projects** at the ecosystem scale in the Everglades, Upper Mississippi River, Coastal Louisiana, and other important regions

Streamlining and Stewardship

Project Planning collected data for new performance measures for the first time in FY 2004. From this baseline data, the program projected results in FY 2006 and expects to see a continued increase in workload associated with energy, transportation, water supply, and restoration projects. When possible, we seek to engage early in the planning phase of projects – before a draft NEPA document is released for public review, at the early stages of wetlands permitting, and in the preliminary evaluations associated with hydropower licensing. This emphasis on early consultation is one surrogate for measuring environmental streamlining.

FY 2006 Expected Results – Streamlining Technical Assistance

Resource Protection: Improve Health of Watersheds, Landscapes, and Marine Resources

| Type of Project | Partnership Projects | Early Consultation |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| Energy: | | |
| Oil and Gas | 2,599 | 1,336 |
| Coal | 1,127 | 586 |
| Hydropower—FERC Licenses | 122 | 77 |
| Hydropower—FERC Relicenses | 260 | 167 |
| Hydropower—Other | 417 | 222 |
| Wind Power | 394 | 124 |
| Transportation: | | |
| Transportation—Federal Highway | 3,612 | 2,497 |
| Transportation—Other Surface | 2,268 | 1,192 |
| Transportation—Airport | 406 | 315 |
| Water Supply/Delivery | 1,539 | 829 |
| Restoration | 1,957 | 1,351 |

The up-front approach to technical assistance is more time intensive; we engage with project sponsors and actively seek to develop positive projects, instead of retrofitting conservation measures onto projects that have already largely been planned. Due to the time commitment and demand for our assistance, we cannot assume this role in every project, but underscore the importance of early consultation for priority projects. Taken in total, we plan to provide early consultation on about 60 percent of our priority projects in FY06.

Partnerships for Habitat Conservation

In FY 2004, Project Planning systematically followed high-priority projects to the final decision-making stage for the first time, and estimated the amount of habitat we helped conserve. “Habitat Conserved” as listed in the table below is defined as the area covered by measures that will avoid or minimize impacts on fish and wildlife, as well as actions that will actively promote protection (e.g., establishing riparian buffers or other areas designated for resource conservation). It is important to note that we projected our FY 2006 results from one year of baseline data, and expect the estimates to become more accurate in the years ahead after we have collected a larger body of information. A few examples of recent successes that will continue into FY 2006 follow the table.

FY 2006 Expected Results – Habitat Conserved through Technical Assistance
Resource Protection: Improve Health of Watersheds, Landscapes, and Marine Resources

| Type of Project | Wetlands (Acres) | Uplands (Acres) | Riparian | | In-stream (Miles) |
|-----------------|---------------------|--------------------|----------|---------|----------------------|
| | | | (Acres) | (Miles) | |
| Energy | 75,557 | 4,177 | 61 | 813 | 74 |
| Hydropower | 2,894 | 27,758 | 361 | 5,032 | 1,055 |
| Transportation | 2,584 | 3,172 | 220 | 350 | 385 |
| Water Supply | 888 | 2,120 | 250 | 881 | 303 |
| Restoration | 17,078 | 52,347 | 103 | 7,468 | 282 |

Cutting Costs and Conserving Resources: Oregon Bridge Replacement

In 2003, the Oregon State legislature authorized \$1.3 billion to replace or repair more than 350 aging bridges over the next decade. This positive news for drivers presented a logistical challenge: integrating multiple stakeholders and careful conservation planning into an ambitious schedule to build or repair hundreds of bridges on time and within budget. Project Planning and other partners joined forces with the Oregon Department of Transportation to streamline programmatic permits and agreements using environmentally friendly standards. By combining wetland mitigation and endangered species conservation into one agreement, ODOT and resource agencies determined conservation priorities and identified multiple new sites for mitigation banking. Our cooperative efforts also made business sense: ODOT estimates it will reduce total costs by about ten percent and net additional savings by decreasing the need for costly redesign forced by litigation. Permit costs will generally drop by 30 percent and construction will be finished two years faster.

Energy Streamlining and Environmental Stewardship in Utah

The Service’s Utah Field Office will continue its commitment to address the increase in demand for biological assistance related to energy projects. This includes reviewing lease proposals, exploration projects, drilling permits, and other types of requests. To assist the Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and Office of Surface Mining, we developed information and recommendations to streamline the process and avoid, minimize, and compensate for unavoidable fish and wildlife impacts. Specifically, for oil and gas development, we developed guidance for pipeline crossings of ephemeral streams, raptor protection, and migratory bird protection as outlined in E.O. 13186. We have also helped energy companies and State agencies provide fish and wildlife training to operators in the field. We are also working with agencies, companies, and the Argonne National Laboratory to minimize the loss of perennial surface waters from subsidence related to coal mining.

Helping Advance Local Priorities

In addition to serving high priorities, Project Planning provides targeted technical assistance for other types of projects that are important to local and State economies. For example, our biologists help local governments and State and Federal partners create navigation and harbor construction projects that are key for economic development. In addition, we help outline measures to protect coral reefs, which are particularly rich ecosystems and nurseries for a host of commercial and recreational fisheries. We also work with partners to plan flood control and beach nourishment projects that protect property, foster tourism, and conserve fish and wildlife.

A number of additional expected accomplishments in FY06 follow.

- Project Planning expects to help partners open over 1,300 miles for fish passage, and will help streamline about 1,250 navigation, harbor, and other water-related projects.
- We expect to provide technical assistance for over 1,000 shoreline stabilization projects, and another 825 flood protection projects.
- Project Planning biologists will help over 3,700 projects include measures to conserve threatened and endangered species. A total of 2,725 will address migratory fish needs, and 2,544 will help sustain migratory bird populations. More than 775 will incorporate strategies to address invasive species.

Navigation and Restoration on the Upper Mississippi and Illinois River Systems

The Service's Rock Island Field Office has been working with the Army Corps of Engineers since 1992 to assess impacts on resources that would occur from increased commercial barge traffic on the Upper Mississippi and Illinois Rivers. Our technical assistance and the input from five States – Illinois, Missouri, Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin – helped broaden the scope of the project to include 400,000 acres of restoration. In the years ahead, these improvements will benefit more than 280,000 acres of National Wildlife Refuge System lands, as well as other lands along 1,200 river miles. The effort will benefit endangered species including the pallid sturgeon, Higgins eye pearly mussel, bald eagle, winged mapleleaf mussel, and Indiana bat. Migratory birds will benefit from bottomland hardwood restoration. In addition, fish passage at navigation dams will help paddlefish and sturgeon reach their historic spawning grounds.

2004 Program Performance Accomplishments

Project Planning strives to be an active part of the development team, helping to build conservation measures into projects from the beginning. This proactive strategy is preferable to modifying projects late in the planning phase after commitments of time and money have been made. We provided early consultation on about 60 percent of priority projects in FY 2004. The table below shows how many priority projects Project Planning assisted, and how many received early consultation.

FY 2004 Accomplishments – Streamlining Technical Assistance
Resource Protection: Improve Health of Watersheds, Landscapes, and Marine Resources

| Type of Project | Partnership Projects | Early Consultation |
|----------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| Energy: | | |
| Oil and Gas | 1,998 | 834 |
| Coal | 945 | 550 |
| Hydropower—FERC Licenses | 78 | 51 |
| Hydropower—FERC Relicenses | 242 | 144 |
| Hydropower—Other | 336 | 176 |
| Wind Power | 274 | 65 |

| | | |
|--------------------------------|-------|-------|
| Transportation: | | |
| Transportation—Federal Highway | 3,157 | 2,366 |
| Transportation—Other Surface | 2,012 | 1,024 |
| Transportation—Airport | 374 | 266 |
| Water Supply/Delivery | 1,292 | 679 |
| Restoration | 1,756 | 1,293 |

Partnerships for Habitat Conservation

Project Planning played an important role in several priority projects in FY 2004, such as the previously described Penobscot Hydropower Agreement – a “win-win” for energy and conservation. The table below illustrates the total amount of habitat we helped conserve last year. As stated before, “Habitat Conserved” is defined as the area covered by measures that will avoid or minimize impacts on fish and wildlife, as well as actions that will promote protection (e.g., establishing riparian buffers or other areas designated for resource conservation). A few examples of successes in FY04 follow the table.

FY 2004 Accomplishments – Habitat Conserved through Technical Assistance
Resource Protection: Improve Health of Watersheds, Landscapes, and Marine Resources

| Type of Project | Wetlands (Acres) | Uplands (Acres) | Riparian | | In-stream (Miles) |
|-----------------|---------------------|--------------------|----------|---------|----------------------|
| | | | (Acres) | (Miles) | |
| Energy | 3,000,820 | 6,886 | 82 | 101 | 90 |
| Hydropower | 4,728 | 22,629 | 378 | 7,468 | 1,308 |
| Transportation | 3,634 | 3,057 | 97 | 223 | 322 |
| Water Supply | 1,476 | 4,366 | 44 | 828 | 196 |
| Restoration | 21,373 | 107,057 | 137 | 10,539 | 1,334 |

National Petroleum Reserve – Alaska Northwest Area Plan

In FY 2004, Project Planning biologists completed National Environmental Policy Act coordination with the Bureau of Land Management regarding oil and gas leasing in part of the Alaska Northwest National Petroleum Reserve. The Northwest Planning Area is approximately 8.8 million acres located on the North Slope of Alaska. Our biologists helped BLM identify about 3 million acres of biologically sensitive habitats worthy of special attention. We also helped craft mitigation measures to protect those habitats and mitigate potential impacts to Pacific brant and other geese, threatened spectacled and Steller’s eiders, yellow-billed loons, polar bears, and other species of concern. In a team effort coordinated by the Fairbanks office, Service personnel across several programs worked collaboratively with BLM to develop and improve mitigation measures for fish, wildlife, and subsistence resources – and to finalize the environmental review within two years.

Restoring Wetlands in South Florida

Project Planning played a key role in advancing the Alligator Creek Restoration Project, proposed by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and co-led by the Army Corps of Engineers. This State-Federal partnership’s purpose is to restore historical hydrological patterns to the wetlands in the 1,600-acre Alligator Creek area of Charlotte Harbor. Proposed activities included dredging, backfilling mosquito ditches, removing exotic plants, and restoring landscapes that had been altered by agricultural practices. The Service worked with planning team members to revise the construction schedule and improve activities to avoid disturbing nesting bald eagles. By coordinating with the applicant and the Corps and helping find alternative approaches, the Service streamlined the environmental review process and expedited actions that will foster significant fish and wildlife benefits.

Pelton Round Butte Hydroelectric Project– Energy and Fish Passage

In July 2004, multiple partners signed an historic agreement that secures 1.5 billion kilowatt-hours of hydropower – enough to supply more than 137,000 homes – and paves the way for salmon and

steelhead to again migrate past Pelton Round Butte's three dams for the first time since 1968. Project Planning's advanced assistance played an essential role in creating a successful agreement for the project, located on the Deschutes River about 90 miles from Portland, Oregon. By creating a strong, well-grounded working relationship with both Portland General Electric and the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs, we were able to avoid litigation from outside interests and related costly delays. We are now moving in partnership to rapidly implement conservation measures, protecting 15 acres of wetlands important in Oregon's high desert, and restoring 60 acres of riparian habitat. A total of 10,623 acres of upland habitat will be acquired to protect mule deer winter-range and support other game and non-game species important to Tribes. New fishways will provide access to 244 miles of high desert streams, which had been all but impassible for almost 50 years. Finally, a \$21.5 million mitigation fund will be used to protect and restore additional habitats in the area.

Helping Advance Local Priorities

In addition to the aforementioned priority projects, Project Planning provided key biological assistance for certain other activities important to our partners in local and State government. These efforts included communication tower construction, navigation and harbor development, and residential and commercial projects. A few examples of FY 2004 accomplishments are listed below.

- Project Planning worked with partners to open over 4,000 miles for fish passage, helping species regain access to some important upstream habitats.
- Our biologists provided early consultation on 1,045 navigation, harbor, and other water-related projects, and assisted nearly 6,966 of these developments in total.
- Project Planning biologists helped over 4,335 projects adopt measures to conserve threatened and endangered species. A total of 2,666 helped address migratory fish needs, and 3,293 helped sustain migratory bird populations. More than 830 projects incorporated strategies focused on invasive species.
- Communication towers continued to produce a significant workload. We helped steer towers away from the most important migratory bird and bat habitat by providing technical assistance on over 4,000 projects.

Conserving Coral Reefs in American Samoa

The Army Corps of Engineers was asked to help develop a second commercial port area within Pago Pago Harbor, American Samoa's principle point of entry for heavy cargo and a key commercial fishery center. The proposed project included a new entrance channel, turning basin, dock, and berthing area, with a ten-acre footprint. The Service's investigation indicated that the initially preferred site supported a more diverse coral reef community and provided relatively greater ecological functions than an alternative site, which also could meet commercial port needs. Project Planning's guidance helped steer the project to this alternative location, which avoided impacts on nearly ten acres of high-quality coral reef habitat.

2005 Planned Program Performance

Similar to recent years, Project Planning expects to see the workload associated with energy, transportation, water supply, and restoration projects continue to grow in FY 2005. We remain committed to focusing on these projects, and helping streamlining them through early consultation when resources allow. With one exception, we expect to provide more early coordination on priority projects in FY 2005 as compared to FY 2004. For Federal highways, we will continue our efforts to "bundle" a number of projects into a single regional environmental review, which helps explain why the total number of early consultations will decrease slightly in FY 2005 even as the emphasis and workload on these important projects continue to increase.

Streamlining Technical Assistance: FY04-05

Resource Protection: Improve Health of Watersheds, Landscapes, and Marine Resources

| Type of Project | Partnership Projects FY04 Actual | Partnership Projects FY05 Est. | Partnership Projects FY05 Planned vs. FY04 Actual | Early Reviews FY04 Actual | Early Reviews FY05 Plan | Early Reviews FY05 Planned vs. FY04 Actual |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|---------------------------|-------------------------|--|
| Energy: | | | | | | |
| Oil and Gas | 1,998 | 2,465 | +467 | 834 | 964 | +130 |
| Coal | 945 | 1,089 | +144 | 550 | 583 | +33 |
| Hydropower— FERC Licenses | 78 | 107 | +29 | 51 | 64 | +13 |
| Hydropower— FERC Relicenses | 242 | 266 | +24 | 144 | 159 | +15 |
| Hydropower— Other | 336 | 418 | +82 | 176 | 223 | +47 |
| Wind Power | 274 | 392 | +118 | 65 | 194 | +129 |
| Transportation: | | | | | | |
| Transportation— Federal Highway | 3,157 | 3,439 | +282 | 2,366 | 2,330 | -36 |
| Transportation— Other Surface | 2,012 | 2,224 | +212 | 1,024 | 1,167 | +143 |
| Transportation— Airport | 374 | 399 | +25 | 266 | 301 | +35 |
| Water Supply/ Delivery | 1,292 | 1,565 | +273 | 679 | 764 | +85 |
| Restoration | 1,756 | 2,017 | +261 | 1,293 | 1,311 | +18 |

Partnerships for Habitat Conservation

In FY 2004, Project Planning provided technical assistance that helped conserve a tremendous amount of habitat – particularly wetlands – related to priority energy projects on Alaska’s enormous North Slope. While the amount of habitat we will help conserve for energy and other priority projects will continue to be high in FY 2005, we expect the magnitude to be lower than FY 2004. As a result, the increase as presented in the “FY04 Actual vs. FY05 Plan” column represents the increase in “Habitat Conserved” we expect to achieve. It is important to reiterate that we estimated our FY 2005 accomplishments from one year of baseline data; projections will become more accurate in the years ahead after we have collected a larger body of information. A few examples of recent successes that will continue into FY 2005 follow the table.

FY04-05 Accomplishments – Habitat Conserved for Priority Projects

Resource Protection: Improve Health of Watersheds, Landscapes, and Marine Resources

| Habitat | FY04 Actual | FY05 Plan (Cumulative) | FY04 Actual vs. FY05 Plan |
|-------------------|-------------|------------------------|---------------------------|
| Wetlands (Acres) | 3,032,031 | 3,129,933 | +97,902 |
| Uplands (Acres) | 143,995 | 213,971 | +69,976 |
| Riparian (Acres) | 737 | 1627 | +890 |
| Riparian (Miles) | 19,158 | 30,641 | +11,483 |
| In-stream (Miles) | 3,250 | 4,548 | +1,298 |

Water Supply and Conservation on the Upper Rio Grande

Project Planning biologists in New Mexico have been working closely with the Bureau of Reclamation, Army Corps of Engineers, New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission, and others to develop the Upper Rio Grande Water Operations Environmental Impact Statement. The purpose of the project is to: (1) identify the operational flexibility of Federal reservoirs and facilities; (2) develop a better understanding of how these facilities could be operated more efficiently and

effectively as an integrated system; (3) formulate a plan for future water operations; and (4) make decisions through better interagency coordination and public involvement. This project promises to add needed flexibility to deliver water in the right place at the right time, while carefully balancing the needs of fish and wildlife resources.

Renewable Energy in New York – Wind Power and Resource Conservation

Project Planning biologists in New York will continue to provide technical assistance to advance renewable wind power generation and conserve migratory birds and other trust resources. The demand for our services is growing; at least 18 projects have been proposed in 22 towns and 16 counties across the State. Currently, 37 wind turbines have been constructed in New York, but as many as 2,000 may eventually be built within its borders. We are also working with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority to bring stakeholders together to discuss a long-term strategy for responsibly developing wind energy and minimizing wildlife impacts. Our *Interim Guidelines on Avoiding and Minimizing Impacts on Wildlife from Wind Turbines* will help frame this discussion. We look forward to receiving stakeholder and industry feedback on the guidelines and working with partners to improve them after the public comment period closes in FY05.

Route 17 and the Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge

Almost the entire length (12 miles) of the old Route 17 roadway follows the eastern boundary of the Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge in Chesapeake, Virginia. The proximity of the old road to the refuge caused a high occurrence of wildlife collisions. Project Planning staff worked on a team with the Army Corps of Engineers, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, and other partners to improve the road, provide wildlife passage, and mitigate wetland impacts. Service biologists were able to help finalize plans to move the new, four-lane facility about ½ mile farther east, away from the refuge boundary, decreasing the risk of collisions and taking care to compensate for wetland losses. Thanks to extensive interagency coordination, FHWA designated the Route 17 project as an “Exemplary Ecosystem Initiative” in 2004. The project is now being constructed.

Helping Advance Local Priorities

As requested and feasible, Project Planning will continue to provide targeted technical assistance for certain additional local priorities in FY05. For example, our biologists will help some local governments and State and Federal partners create watershed and resource management plans, and provide biological assistance to address wetland impacts. A number of other planned accomplishments in FY05 follow.

- Project Planning expects to help partners open over 1,040 miles for fish passage, providing access to important upstream habitats.
- The program will provide biological assistance on 1,500 watershed and resource management plans.
- We expect to provide technical assistance for 9,700 residential, commercial, and government facility projects.
- Project Planning biologists will help over 3,550 projects adopt measures to conserve threatened and endangered species. A total of 2,125 will help address migratory fish needs, and 2,778 will help sustain migratory bird populations. More than 720 will incorporate strategies focused on invasive species concerns.

Looking Strategically to the Future

Project Planning has assembled a Task Force of field, Region, and Washington office staff and managers, which will meet for the first time in January 2005. The group is charged with addressing a series of goals over the following 12-18 months. First, the Task Force will create a Strategic Plan that will guide the program's work for the next five years. The process will include clear strategies to engage our partners both within and outside of the Service, and incorporate their important input so we can become even more responsive to our customers' needs. The group will also take the next steps in the effort to measure the functional results of our technical assistance. In essence, we will outline a process for identifying a representative sample of our projects, developing evaluation criteria, and measuring conservation benefits. All of this work will prepare Project Planning for the Program Assessment Rating Tool review planned in the next two years.

Justification of 2006 Program Changes

| Subactivity | | 2006 Budget Request | Program Changes (+/-) |
|------------------|---------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Project Planning | \$(000) | 30,104 | -1,087 |
| | FTE | 282 | 0 |

The FY 2006 budget request for Project Planning is \$30,104,000 and 282 FTEs, a net program decrease of \$1,087,000 from the 2005 enacted level.

FERC Forest Plan Reduction (-\$266,000)

Funds for part of this program have been eliminated to offset funding increases elsewhere in the President's budget that address higher priorities and consistently with potentially less workload as a result of the Healthy Forest Initiative. The reduction would scale back Project Planning's capacity to address Federal Energy Regulatory Commission hydropower issues in the Pacific Northwest by about 25 percent, and eliminate three FTEs. Funds for this technical assistance were identified within base funding in 1997 to focus on hydropower relicensings, which provide an opportunity to work with Federal, State, local, and industry partners to improve in-stream flows, provide fish passage, and conserve wetlands and other key habitat. Project Planning will continue to provide biological assistance on important hydropower projects, as other funding allows.

Cedar City, Utah ES Office (-\$99,000)

Funding for the Cedar City, Utah Ecological Services Field Office, including one FTE, has been eliminated to President's budget request that are needed to address higher priorities. The funding has focused on prairie dog recovery throughout southern Utah. In addition to recovery actions, funds were used to implement and administer several Habitat Conservation Plans, including the Iron County HCP; develop two Safe Harbor agreements in Garfield County and one in Iron County; relocate prairie dogs from private, county, and Tribal properties to suitable habitat; and enhance county properties for prairie dog establishment. The Service will continue to work with partners on critical prairie dog issues as other funding allows. Elimination of the Cedar City Office is not directly related to Project Planning's performance goals under the Department of the Interior's Strategic Plan; therefore, this decrease will not affect the program's ability to meet projected accomplishments.

Middle Rio Grande Bosque (-\$542,000)

Funding for this program has been eliminated to offset funding increases elsewhere in the President's budget request that are necessary to address higher priorities. The Middle Rio Grande Bosque Initiative is an interagency effort to restore and manage 180 miles of the Rio Grande River within central New Mexico. To continue activities in this region, the Service will work with partners to help obtain funding from alternative sources such as State and local natural resources agencies, conservation organizations, and various Federal grant programs. Securing comparable funds from

other partners would help the program maintain the same level of service to local communities. The Middle Rio Grande Bosque Initiative is not directly related to performance goals under the Department's Strategic Plan. As a result, this decrease will not affect the program's ability to meet strategic goals.

Montana Wildlife Conservation Plan Development (-\$394,000)

Funding for this program has been eliminated to offset funding increases elsewhere in the President's budget that address higher priorities. The \$394,000 for wildlife conservation plans in Montana has been used to develop strategies for conserving sensitive species, including Federal listed species under the Endangered Species Act. In particular, the funding has supported work conducted by the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (MDNRC) and Service to develop a multi-species Habitat Conservation Plan for Montana's forested trust lands. The Service will support similar efforts in Montana as possible with other endangered species funding. This effort is not directly related to Project Planning's performance goals under the Department's Strategic Plan, and therefore the decrease will not affect the program's ability to meet its projected accomplishments.

Increases to Address FY 2005 Rescissions (+\$224,000)

The fiscal year 2005 Omnibus Appropriation Act (P.L. 108-447) included two across the board rescissions, netting a 1.3 percent reduction to all Service programs. An increase of \$224,000 will restore funding to the 2004 enacted level and will allow the Service to maintain performance and base program capability. This would allow Project Planning to maintain its high level of customer service and conservation results in FY06. In total, the President's budget includes an increase of \$224,000 to address FY05 rescissions. Specifically, \$28,000 would be restored to Project Planning's Everglades conservation effort; \$8,000 would be restored to the Tongass Land Management Plan partnership effort in Alaska; \$24,000 would be restored for streamlining efforts related to Accelerated Federal Energy Regulatory Commission Relicensing; \$24,000 would be restored to the California Bay Delta project focused on providing water supply and conserving habitat; \$2,000 would be restored to address Pacific Northwest Salmon; and \$138,000 would be restored to General Program Activities to address other Administration high-priority projects related to energy, transportation, water supply, and restoration. Collectively, these funds would allow Project Planning to provide streamlined biological expertise for another 67 high priority projects, including 21 energy projects, 30 transportation projects, 6 water supply projects, and 10 restoration projects. This work would help conserve about 740 wetland acres, 635 upland acres, 7 miles of riparian habitat, and 15 miles of in-stream habitat.

Vehicle Reduction (-\$10,000)

The 2006 budget proposes a reduction of \$10,000 in the Project Planning program to recognize expected savings to be achieved through improved fleet management within the Service and across the Department of Interior.

Program Performance Summary

| End Outcome Goal 1.1: Resource Protection. Improve Health of Watersheds, Landscapes, and Marine Resources | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| PART Efficiency Measures or other Outputs | FY 2004 Actual | FY 2005 Plan/Budget | FY 2005 Revised Final Plan | 2006 Plan | Change - 2005 Plan to 2006 | Long-term Target (2008) |
| Energy Projects – (BUR) Streamlining Biological Assistance | | | | | | |
| <i>Oil and Gas</i> | 834 | 964 | 956 | 1,336 | +380 (+40%) | 1,340 |
| <i>Coal</i> | 550 | 583 | 578 | 586 | +8 (+1%) | 590 |
| <i>Hydropower – FERC Licenses</i> | 61 | 71 | 70 | 61 | -9 (-13%) | 60 |
| <i>Hydropower – FERC Relicenses</i> | 169 | 135 | 134 | 112 | -22 (-16%) | 110 |
| <i>Hydropower – Other</i> | 176 | 223 | 221 | 222 | +1 (0%) | 220 |
| <i>Wind Power</i> | 65 | 194 | 192 | 124 | -68 (-36%) | 120 |
| Transportation Projects – (BUR) Streamlining Biological Assistance | | | | | | |
| Federal Highway | 2,366 | 2,330 | 2,311 | 2,497 | +186 (+8%) | 2,500 |
| <i>Other Surface</i> | 1,024 | 1,167 | 1,157 | 1,192 | +35 (+3%) | 1,200 |
| <i>Airport</i> | 266 | 301 | 299 | 315 | +16 (+6%) | 320 |
| <i>Water Supply/Delivery – (BUR) Streamlining Biological Assistance</i> | 679 | 764 | 758 | 829 | +71 (+9%) | 830 |
| Restoration – (BUR) Streamlining Biological Assistance | 1,293 | 1,311 | 1,300 | 1,351 | +51 (+4%) | 1,360 |
| Habitat Conserved through Biological Assistance (BUR) | | | | | | |
| <i>Wetlands (Acres) – Cumulative</i> | 3,032,031 | 3,129,933 | 3,104,006 | 3,202,904 | +98,898 (+3%) | 3,400,701 |
| <i>Uplands (Acres) – Cumulative</i> | 143,995 | 213,971 | 212,199 | 296,997 | +84,798 (+40%) | 466,594 |
| <i>Riparian (Acres) – Cumulative</i> | 19,158 | 30,641 | 30,387 | 44,854 | 14,467 (+48%) | 73,788 |
| <i>Riparian (Miles) – Cumulative</i> | 737 | 1,627 | 1,613 | 2,600 | 986 (+61%) | 4,572 |
| <i>In-stream (Miles) – Cumulative</i> | 3,250 | 4,548 | 4,510 | 6,502 | +1,991 (+44%) | 10,484 |