

Revised Guidance and Template for the Development of Recovery Outlines

April 2018

A recovery outline is a *brief* document that sketches, in broad brushstrokes, the interim conservation and management program for a species during the time between the final listing under the Endangered Species Act (Act) and completion of the recovery plan. At a minimum, a recovery outline guides initial recovery actions and informs other activities, such as section 7 consultations, and development of Habitat Conservation Plans, Safe Harbor Agreements, and other conservation management tools to support recovery of the species. This ensures that options for future recovery needs of the species are maintained.

A recovery outline is not an outline of a recovery plan. The recovery outline is intended for use by the Service and may inform the voluntary conservation actions of interested parties. While consultation with parties outside the Service is not required during the development of recovery outlines, States, Tribes, partners, non-governmental organizations, and stakeholders will be consulted during development of the recovery plan.

Timeline and Approval: Recovery outlines are to be posted on the species page in the Service's Environmental Conservation Online System (ECOS) and ready for implementation no later than thirty days after the final listing rule is published. No notification or FR notice is necessary. Recovery outlines should be approved and signed at the level determined by the lead region. For species' whose ranges span the boundaries of multiple regions, concurrence by the other regions should be obtained. Concurrence by email is acceptable.

Sources: The primary source of information for the recovery outline should be the Species Status Assessment (SSA) completed for the listing determination. In addition, a recovery outline may draw on the listing rule, candidate assessment form, candidate conservation agreements (CCAs, CCAAs), and other pre-listing conservation plans that may provide information relevant to the species conservation management. There should be no need to gather additional information or perform additional analyses.

Template: The following template provides assistance in developing a recovery outline. Prompts in italics (which should be deleted prior to finalization of the recovery outline) in each section are intended to trigger thinking on the types of issues that might impede or benefit a species recovery, and the types of activities that might address those issues. The specific content of a recovery outline should be tailored to the specific life history needs and threats relevant to the species' current status and recovery. At a minimum, all recovery outlines should include:

- Species name
- Range
- Recovery Priority Number
- Listing Status
- Lead Regional and Field Offices, and any cooperating offices
- Background
- Interim Recovery Program, including Interim Recovery Strategy and Action Plan

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Recovery Outline

[Photograph optional]

Species Name: Common _____, Latin _____ [may reverse for plants]

Species Range: *states and countries*

Recovery Priority Number: *1 – 18C; explanation provided below*

Listing Status: *E or T; date*

Lead Regional Office/Cooperating RO(s):

Lead Field Office/Cooperating FO(s):

Lead Contact:

1) Background

This section should be a brief, succinct summary of conservation-relevant information for the species, drawn almost exclusively from the recently completed SSA and listing rule. It should heavily reference the SSA and rule rather than repeat them. The use of bullets instead of a narrative format is acceptable. You can provide a link to the appropriate section of the SSA for additional information for any of these sections.

Type and Quality of Available Information to Date:

- **Important information gaps:** *Identify whether and, if so, how information gaps may affect identification of effective recovery actions*
- **Treatment of uncertainties:**
 - *Describe uncertainties about information or situations concerning the species*
 - *Identify assumptions or constraints that may affect the interim recovery program*

Brief Life History: *Important aspects of the species' biology and ecology that are relevant to its endangerment and conservation (e.g., taxonomic classification, physiological needs, migratory behavior, diet, reproductive strategy, vulnerable life stages, obligate relationships). Draw from Resource Needs section of the SSA. Should be limited to a paragraph in most cases*

Limiting Life History Characteristics: *Focus on life history characters that might limit or dictate species responses or constrain choice of recovery actions, such as: specific habitat requirements, low fecundity, delayed maturity, etc. Draw from Resource Needs section of the SSA. Should be limited to a paragraph in most cases*

Primary Threats: *Focus on the most significant threats identified in the SSA in need of immediate amelioration prior to recovery plan completion - Should be limited to a paragraph in most cases*

Current Biological Status of the Species: *Draw from the Executive Summary of the SSA - Should be limited to a couple of paragraphs in most cases*

- **Overview:** *Historical and current distribution, population sizes, rates of decline, etc.*
- **3 Rs:** *What is the current status of the 3 Rs for this species?*
 - **Resiliency**
 - **Representation**
 - **Redundancy**

Conservation Actions to Date: *Identify actions taken pursuant to Candidate Conservation Agreements, etc., with a focus on what has worked, what has not, and why, if known*

Recovery Priority Number: *Provide # and rationale - derived by applying RPN guidance in 48 FR 43098 as corrected in 48 FR 51908*

2) Interim Recovery Program

Interim Recovery Strategy: *The Interim Recovery Strategy provides the logic connecting the species biology and threats to the suite of recommendations in the Action Plan. It may briefly describe what recovery of this species might look like in terms of the 3 Rs. This should provide a foundation for identifying and implementing initial recovery actions, as well as inform decisions made under sections 7 and 10 of the Act.*

Action Plan: *The action plan should identify: 1) survival needs that must be addressed immediately (for example, reverse population decline); 2) key recovery actions that should be initiated immediately; 3) the primary threats that the actions will address; and 4) where appropriate, potential partners for implementation. The types of actions might include, but are not required or limited to:*

- *reduce primary threats identified in the SSA to prevent further decline in species' condition;*
- *protect or restore key habitats identified in the SSA;*
- *protect or enhance populations vulnerable to extirpation, etc.;*
- *prevent loss of recovery options prior to completion of the recovery plan;*
- *identify project types and locations that might need special attention during section 7 consultation;*
- *identify special needs for critical habitat, if designated;*
- *identify research and monitoring needed to fill critical information gaps;*
- *initiate long-term actions that should be implemented continuously (monitoring, management); and*
- *identify opportunities for voluntary involvement of stakeholders*

A table may be a useful way to organize and track the interim recovery program.

THE FOLLOWING IS AN *EXAMPLE ONLY* – tailor and expand this table to the needs of your species and its issues; the level of detail for any action is adjustable as deemed appropriate based on best available information

Interim Recovery Action Plan – Prioritized in order of need for the species’ recovery.

Preliminary Recovery Actions		
Recovery Actions	Threats Addressed	Contributions to Recovery
1. Control nest parasites (brown-headed cowbirds).	Unsustainable mortality	Prevent further declines in species’ demographic trends
2. Implement water quality monitoring and improvement program.	Reduced fitness due to poor health	Prevent further declines in species’ demographic trends
3. Enhance foraging habitat at key migratory stopovers.	Lack of available food base	Increase productivity to restore depleted populations
4. Identify and conserve key habitat areas in need of conservation. This may include breeding and migratory habitats.	Habitat loss, distribution, quality	Conserve recovery options for the future

3) Preliminary Steps for Recovery Planning [OPTIONAL section – shall not delay meeting the 30-day requirement to post the Recovery Outline in ECOS]

All recovery plans stemming from SSAs should be developed according to the Recovery Planning and Implementation model. Some decisions related to the process of developing the plan can be made early and be documented in the recovery outline, including:

Will a recovery plan be developed? *If a recovery plan will not be developed, that decision, and its rationale should be explained here. The Service may only exempt a species from recovery planning if it is determined that a recovery plan will not promote the conservation of the species and an exemption memorandum with concurrence from the Director is needed.*

Type of recovery plan: *Single species, multi-species, ecosystem, etc.*

Who will develop the recovery plan: *Lead biologist, contractor, recovery team, etc.*

Plan for stakeholder role/involvement: *Please describe a brief plan for partner and stakeholder, especially states, roles/involvement in the recovery planning and/or implementation process. This can be in tabular format.*

Recovery Planning milestones: *Service policy states that a draft recovery plan will be completed within 18 months with a final plan available within 2 ½ years of listing. Identification of interim milestones may ensure expeditious process to meet those timeframes.*

Signed: _____
Title

Date _____