



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Our Endangered Species Program and How It Works with Landowners



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Dr. Michael Forstner, Texas State University

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) defines endangered species as species in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of their range. Threatened species are likely to become endangered in the foreseeable future.

In cooperation with public and private partners, the Endangered Species Program conserves endangered and threatened species and the ecosystems upon which they depend. Conservation helps ensure functioning ecosystems, preserve our natural heritage for future generations, and maintain long-term economic prosperity. For more information, visit the Program's Web site at <http://www.fws.gov/Endangered/>

Our Program's priorities are:

- Conserving imperiled species
- Recovering listed species
- Providing quality customer service to Federal, State, and local governments, Tribes, and private citizens to assist in conserving listed species while meeting their social and economic objectives.

Endangered Species Program Elements

■ Through the Candidate Conservation program, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), in partnership with State and Federal agencies, Tribes, private organizations, and landowners, works to reduce the threats to declining species and thus prevent the need for listing. By acting early before a species requires ESA protection, the Service can maintain management flexibility for landowners and reduce the costs of recovery.

■ Through the Listing program, the Service follows Federal rulemaking procedures and specific Endangered Species Act requirements to determine whether to list species. A formal peer-review process and an opportunity for public comment ensure that the Service obtains the best available scientific information in making its decisions.

When it is prudent to do so, the Service protects essential habitat through designating critical habitat at the time a species is listed or soon afterwards. Once a species is listed, it is afforded the full range of protection under the Act, including prohibitions on unauthorized killing, harming, or otherwise taking and restrictions on importing and exporting to prevent trade-related declines.

- Through the Consultation program, the Service works with Federal agencies as they ensure that the activities they authorize are compatible with species conservation. The Service also encourages Federal agencies to involve their applicants, such as private landowners, in the consultation process through opportunities to provide information and review documents.
- Through the Recovery program, the Service develops partnerships

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with Federal, State, and local agencies, Tribes, researchers, conservation organizations, businesses, landowners, and private citizens to conserve listed species. Recovery efforts include a range of management activities, such as breeding species in captivity and protecting habitat or restoring it. Beneficial activities may include addressing threats such as removing introduced predators to stabilize listed species so they will increase. A species is considered for delisting once it recovers to the point where it is secure in the wild and no longer needs the protection of the ESA.

Assistance to Landowners

Approximately half of listed species have at least 80 percent of their habitat on private lands. Thus, the participation of private landowners is critical to successful species recovery. Several programs provide incentives for private landowners, Tribes, State and local governments, industry, and agricultural interests.

- The Safe Harbor Policy encourages voluntary management for listed species to promote recovery on non-Federal lands by providing assurances to property owners that no additional management activities will be required for the species.
- The Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances Policy provides incentives for non-Federal property owners to conserve candidate species, with the goal of making listing

unnecessary. This includes assurances that no additional management activities will be required even if the species becomes listed.

■ Habitat Conservation Planning allows private landowners to develop land supporting listed species provided they undertake conservation measures. The No Surprises Policy assures participating landowners that they will incur no additional mitigation requirements beyond those agreed to in their Habitat Conservation Plans, even if circumstances change.

■ Conservation Banks are permanently protected privately or publicly owned lands that are managed for endangered, threatened, and other at-risk species. A conservation bank is like a biological bank account. Instead of money, the bank owner has habitat or species credits to sell.

Grants Program

■ The Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund (section 6 of the ESA) provides funding to States and Territories to participate in a range of conservation projects on non-Federal lands for candidate, proposed, and listed species. Because more than half of all listed species spend at least part of their life-cycle on privately owned lands, the Service recognizes that conservation success depends on working cooperatively with landowners, communities, and Tribes to foster voluntary stewardship. States and Territories play a key role in this work. Although eligibility in the grant program is limited to States and Territories, individual citizens or groups—for example, land conservancies, community organizations, and conservation organizations—may work as subgrantees with a State or Territorial agency on conservation efforts that are mutually beneficial.

Funding is available:

- to implement conservation projects for listed and species at-risk (Conservation Grants);
- to integrate habitat conservation into local land use planning through the development of Habitat Conservation Plans (Habitat Conservation Planning Assistance Grants);
- to further species conservation through land acquisition and easements

Contact Us

Want more information? Please contact the appropriate office below:

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Region Four — Southeast

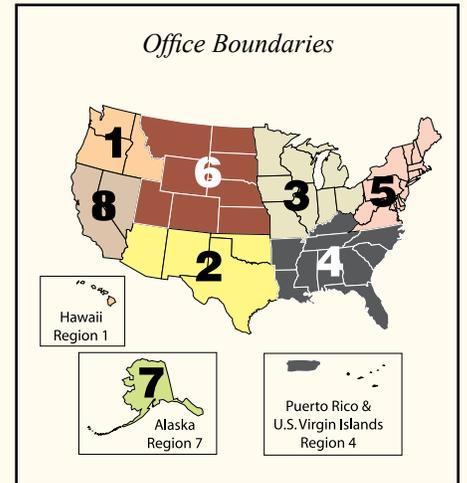
1875 Century Boulevard
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associated with approved Habitat Conservation Plans (HCP Land Acquisition Grants); and

- to acquire lands essential to the recovery of listed species (Recovery Land Acquisition Grants).

Looking Ahead

By building strong partnerships and initiating early and collaborative conservation efforts, the Service can best conserve endangered and threatened species and the ecosystems upon which they depend.



Region Five — Northeast

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