

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
FY 2016 Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund
Project Descriptions**

Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) Land Acquisition Grants by State:

California

City of Carlsbad Habitat Management Plan (HMP) (San Diego County) \$2,000,000.

This project will purchase up to 154 acres of important biological core habitat areas for the coastal California gnatcatcher. The acquisition will also benefit numerous other listed and unlisted species covered by the Carlsbad HMP, including the least Bell's vireo, California least tern, western snowy plover, and numerous plant species. The proposed acquisitions support a larger, landscape-level conservation initiative and greatly enhance the conservation goals of the Carlsbad HMP by securing key regional wildlife linkages and preserving core habitat in the three target areas. The parcels proposed for acquisition support a mosaic of high-quality riparian and upland habitats.

West Valley, City of Colton Habitat Conservation Plan (San Bernardino County)

\$2,000,000. This grant will result in acquisition of 16 acres of habitat for the federally-listed endangered Delhi Sands flower-loving fly. The Delhi Sands flower-loving fly is endemic to San Bernardino and Riverside Counties and is in danger of extinction due to the widespread loss and degradation of its habitat. The parcels proposed for acquisition will enhance the largest and most contiguous blocks of Delhi Sands flower-loving fly habitat in protection. Acquisition of the parcels will also support the Western Riverside Multiple Species HCP and other smaller regional planning efforts within San Bernardino County.

Coachella Valley Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) (Riverside County) \$2,000,000.

This grant will result in the acquisition of up to 4,823 acres that will greatly enhance the Coachella Valley MSHCP by securing key regional wildlife linkages, sand transport areas, and core habitat areas. These land acquisitions will benefit many sensitive species, including federally-listed species such as Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard, desert tortoise, and peninsular bighorn sheep. The proposed acquisitions will complement and greatly enhance the ecological value of the many other acquisitions that have occurred in these areas in the last few years.

Santa Clara Valley Habitat Conservation Plan (Santa Clara County) \$2,000,000.

This grant will support the acquisition of up to 3,286 acres in Santa Clara County that will protect key habitat for covered species such as the federally-listed bay checkerspot butterfly, California tiger salamander, and California red-legged frog. The property proposed for acquisition fits into a local assemblage of publicly and privately protected lands which complement a suite of other organizations' conservation goals for the area. Purchase of this property will secure vital linkages to protected habitat and will help ameliorate the effects of climate change on covered species by providing a range of environmental gradients.

Shell Oil Company/Metropolitan Water District Habitat Conservation Plan (Los Angeles County) \$2,000,000.

This grant will support the acquisition of approximately 56 acres of land in Los Angeles County. Los Angeles County is largely urbanized and all remaining open space is highly vulnerable to development. The remaining natural open space contains a surprising diversity and abundance of wildlife and plant species. These factors combine to create an urgent need to conserve remaining natural open space to support populations of native species and habitats as well as to assist in the recovery of listed species. This grant will help conserve habitat in eastern Chino/Puente Hills for an important population of federally-listed threatened coastal California gnatcatcher, and will help protect important habitat for the cactus wren, a California Species of Concern.

Western Riverside Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan (Riverside County) \$2,000,000.

This grant will support the acquisition of approximately 1,025 acres of land in Riverside County to link protected areas and supplement core habitat for covered species. This acquisition will benefit numerous sensitive species including federally-listed species such as the California gnatcatcher, Arroyo southwestern toad, and Quino checkerspot butterfly. The acquisition will support the assembly of the 500,000-acre preserve that is part of the Western Riverside MSHCP by protecting large blocks of coastal sage scrub, chaparral, and grassland habitats.

Florida

Perdido Key Coastal Tract Acquisition (Escambia County) \$2,000,000.

This grant will enable the acquisition of up to 31 acres of Gulf-front habitat used by the Perdido Key beach mouse. Acquisition and protection of this property will maintain connectivity among beach mouse populations. The Perdido Key beach mouse exists only on Perdido Key and faces increasing impacts from coastal development. Other federally-listed species to benefit from this land acquisition include the loggerhead sea turtle, green sea turtle, leatherback sea turtle, Kemp's Ridley sea turtle, and piping plover. These species will benefit from reduced threat of development impacts and by the proposed beach and dune access controls.

Hawai'i

Helemano Wilderness Area (Honolulu County) \$2,000,000.

The Helemano Wilderness Area (HWA) project on Oahu will permanently protect over 3,000 acres of habitat for the federally-listed endangered Hawaiian hoary bat. The proposed acquisition will complement mitigation efforts outlined in HCPs for three Oahu wind energy complexes. Half of the acquisition area contains bat habitat with no need for management or restoration and a substantial portion of the remainder will be reforested and incorporated into ongoing research studies on optimal bat habitat and forest design. The HWA project also includes upland portions of the Paukauila and Kiikii Watersheds. The Paukauila-Kiikii stream drainage basin is the largest on Oahu, supplying drinking water to communities from Pearl Harbor to the North Shore – a third of Oahu's residents. Thus, in addition to aiding the recovery of the Hawaiian hoary bat, acquiring the HWA will protect and secure clean drinking water for Oahu's residents.

Montana

Whitefish Lake Watershed Project (Flathead County) \$2,000,000.

A conservation easement on this Plum Creek property will greatly complement conservation efforts for the landscape-scale Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation HCP. It will prevent impacts to the Canada lynx, bull trout, and grizzly bear habitat from imminent development and ensure vital linkages for these federally-listed species are maintained. This acquisition will secure some of the remaining unprotected habitat in a large partnership effort to conserve much of the Crown of the Continent, including working lands, in northwestern Montana.

Washington

Mt. Si Area Old Growth Phase II (King County) \$2,000,000.

The objective of the second phase of this ongoing conservation effort is to acquire and permanently protect 1,415 acres of habitat for the marbled murrelet, northern spotted owl, gray wolf, and 11 unlisted species including the Pacific fisher and wolverine. The acquisition will prevent habitat loss due to development and will complement the resource goals of the Washington Department of Natural Resource's Forest Lands HCP. The acquisition will fill significant voids in the matrix of protected state and federal lands and prevent further fragmentation of high-quality habitat.

Grand Coulee Ranch (Douglas County) \$2,000,000.

The Grand Coulee Ranch (GCR) project is part of an ongoing Washington Department of Fish Wildlife (WDFW) effort to conserve over 20,571 acres of shrub-steppe habitat in Douglas County to protect and conserve shrub-steppe obligate species. The GCR project has completed two of three acquisitions, securing 13,321 acres for conservation, and establishing WDFW's Big Bend Wildlife Area Unit. This grant will aid in the acquisition of 4,255 acres of the remaining 7,250 acres currently under purchase agreement. The Grand Coulee Ranch is one of the few large tracts of shrub-steppe suitable for conservation of the Columbia Basin pygmy rabbit, greater sage-grouse, Washington ground squirrel, and Columbian sharp-tailed grouse. The area also provides important habitat for 24 state-listed wildlife and plant species. Acquisition will provide public access to a significant new natural area with roughly 13 miles of shoreline along the Columbia River's Rufus Woods Reservoir.

HCP Planning Assistance Grants by State:

California

Yolo County Habitat Conservation Plan (Yolo County) \$820,660.

This funding will support the planning phase of the Yolo Natural Heritage Program HCP in northern California. The Yolo County HCP is comprised of Yolo County and all four incorporated cities: Davis, Woodland, Winters, and West Sacramento. The HCP will aim to protect habitat and agricultural land county-wide and allow for effective coordination between development agencies and conservation agencies to ensure conservation occurs through an effective, collaborative, and cost-effective process. The HCP will also direct growth within cities while preserving open space. Numerous federally-listed species will benefit from this HCP including the vernal pool tadpole shrimp, giant garter snake, California tiger salamander, and least Bell's vireo.

Hawai'i

Kaua'i Seabird Habitat Conservation Program: Kaua'i Island Utility Cooperative Habitat Conservation Plan (Kaua'i County) \$906,105.

The Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources, in coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is developing the Kaua'i Seabird Habitat Conservation Program – Kaua'i Island Utility Cooperative HCP (KIUC HCP) to address incidental take of the endangered Hawaiian petrel, the threatened Newell's shearwater, and the band-rumped storm petrel, a candidate for listing, due to light attraction and utility line collisions on the island of Kaua'i. Completion of the KIUC HCP will result in the implementation of landscape-scale conservation to mitigate for island-wide take and a thorough minimization plan for listed seabirds on Kaua'i. It is critical to the listed seabirds' survival that landscape-scale breeding colony management takes place to abate the current population declines.

Hawaiian Hoary Bat Habitat Conservation Plan for Biomass and Timber Harvest in the Hawaiian Islands* (Hawai'i, Honolulu, Kalawao, Kaua'i, and Maui Counties) \$395,000.

The Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources, in cooperation with members of the Hawai'i Forest Industry Association and biomass industry, will develop an HCP to conserve the Hawaiian hoary bat (HHB) during biomass and timber harvest activities in the Hawaiian Islands. The HCP will result in a better understanding of the HHB's status and distribution in commercial forest stands, reduce and mitigate impacts from biomass and timber harvest operations, and conserve the HHB while allowing sustainable forest management practices, which will allow public and private landowners to meet economic, ecological, and social goals.

Iowa

Multi-Species Wind Power Habitat Conservation Plan (State-wide) \$750,000.

MidAmerican Energy, in partnership with the State of Iowa, is developing a multi-species HCP for 19 wind power facilities within the State of Iowa. The State of Iowa is a leader in wind

energy capacity, ranking third in the Nation for installed megawatt capacity. Mid-American Energy constitutes the majority of that capacity. MidAmerican Energy is seeking incidental take authorization through Section 10 of the Endangered Species Act for the endangered Indiana bat and the threatened northern long-eared bat. The HCP will cover MidAmerican's current and proposed wind energy facilities and will also support critical studies and investigations associated with bat distribution and migration patterns.

Multi-State

Multi-Species Cave-Dwelling Bat Habitat Conservation Plan (State-wide: MI, MN, WI) \$1,000,000.

The Departments of Natural Resources in Michigan (MIDNR), Minnesota (MNDNR) and Wisconsin (WDNR) are developing a multi-species HCP that focuses on forest management practices on state, county, and private land within the three states. The proposal seeks funding to continue the development of the multi-species HCP, associated NEPA document, and on-going studies and investigations to inform forest management practices and bat conservation. The project will result in a better understanding of species distribution and summer habitat use by cave dwelling bats, including the federally-listed Indiana and northern long-eared bats. The project will also develop approaches to conserve covered species while allowing sustainable forest management practices, which in-turn, will allow public and private landowners to meet economic, ecological and social goals.

Oregon

Deschutes Basin Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan (Deschutes, Crook, Jefferson, Klamath, Wasco and Sherman Counties) \$700,000.

The Deschutes Basin Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan (DBHCP) is being prepared by eight Irrigation Districts and the City of Prineville to maintain and improve habitat for the federally-listed Oregon spotted frog, bull trout, Middle Columbia River steelhead, sockeye salmon, and Chinook salmon in the Upper Deschutes Basin, while meeting current and future irrigation and municipal water needs in a balanced, economically viable, and sustainable manner. The DBHCP will bring certainty to endangered species management and irrigated agriculture in the Upper Deschutes Basin, and will serve as a model for coordinated and cooperative use of water resources throughout the irrigated western United States. This year's funding will support the final phase of a multi-year collaboration between the eight Irrigation Districts, Prineville, State and Federal resource agencies, and non-governmental stakeholders in the Deschutes Basin.

Texas

Pedernales Electric Cooperative Habitat Conservation Plan (Multiple-counties) \$1,000,000.

The Pedernales Electric Cooperative HCP will provide protection to 34 species across 5 million acres in 21 counties in Texas as a result of avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures for

power supply delivery and infrastructure maintenance. The proposed HCP would provide a high conservation benefit to listed karst invertebrates and the Georgetown salamander. This funding will result in a draft HCP and associated NEPA compliance documents.

Recovery Land Acquisition Grants by State:

Arizona

EC Bar Ranch (Apache County) \$1,000,000.

The Arizona Game and Fish Department will use this grant to acquire a 310-acre tract along over three miles of Nutrioso Creek located in Apache County. This acquisition will primarily benefit the endangered New Mexico meadow jumping mouse and threatened Little Colorado spinedace. The proposed acquisition includes 111 acres of surface water rights, 45 acre-feet of storage water rights, 94 acres of an established conservation easement covered by the New Mexico Land Conservancy, and would connect to the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest at the north end of the property. The EC Bar Ranch supports the largest concentration of spinedace and perennial water on Nutrioso Creek, and to date, jumping mice are only known to occupy this reach of Nutrioso Creek.

California

Horseshoe Pebble Plain (San Bernardino County) \$1,000,000.

This funding will be used to acquire and permanently conserve 240 acres of pebble plain habitat. Found only in the Big Bear and Holcomb Valleys of California, pebble plain habitat supports several small, endemic plant species adapted to the harsh, clay soils and surrounded by a sea of conifers. This acquisition will promote the recovery of several endemic plant species including the federally-listed threatened Bear Valley sandwort, ash-gray Indian paintbrush, and the southern mountain buckwheat.

Careaga Canyon Ranch (Santa Barbara County) \$750,000.

The proposed acquisition will permanently protect three parcels on the Careaga Canyon Ranch property through conservation easements. This property contains habitat that supports sensitive species including the federally-listed California tiger salamander and California red-legged frog, along with a host of other rare plant and animal species. This is one of the largest undeveloped areas of riparian, oak woodland, grassland, and scrub habitats between existing coastal and inland natural areas of Santa Barbara County.

San Diego Vernal Pools (San Diego County) \$750,000.

This funding will be used to acquire habitat to support the recovery of southern California vernal pool species. Vernal pools are seasonal wetlands that occur in specific soils and micro-topography in Mediterranean-type climates. San Diego vernal pools provide essential habitat for five federally-listed endangered species; San Diego Mesa mint, San Diego button-celery, California Orcutt grass, Riverside fairy shrimp, and San Diego fairy shrimp, as well as the

federally-listed threatened spreading navarretia and Otay Mesa mint. In addition, the pools support a large number of sensitive and endemic plant and animal species.

Florida

Lake Wales Ridge Ecosystem Recovery Land Acquisition (Lake County) \$1,200,000.

This grant will enable the acquisition of 12 acres of habitat to support the recovery of several federally-protected plants on the north end of the Lake Wales Ridge. Securing this site will protect populations of Britton's beargrass and scrub pigeon wings in the northernmost portions of each plant's range. The tract also contains significant populations of Florida bonamia and scrub buckwheat. Small populations of the federally-listed threatened sand skink and gopher tortoise, a candidate for listing, have also been observed on the site. Lake County, with assistance from the Florida Forest Service, will manage the tract in perpetuity for the benefit of the rare plant species.

Highlands County Grassy Lake Scrub Tract (Highlands County) \$600,900.

This grant will enable the acquisition of 55 acres of habitat to support the recovery of two federally-listed threatened skinks found in the scrub communities of the Lake Wales Ridge; the sand skink and bluetail mole skink. Additionally, the gopher tortoise, a candidate species, and four federally-listed pant species are also present on the property and will benefit from its acquisition and permanent protection. Highlands County and its partners will initiate proactive restoration of this site as soon as it is acquired.

Georgia

Raccoon Creek Headwaters Acquisition (Paulding County) \$1,000,000.

This acquisition will assist in the acquisition of 700 acres and will permanently protect the headwaters of Raccoon Creek, located in north Georgia less than 25 miles from downtown Atlanta. This creek is critical for the long-term survival and conservation of two endemic and federally-listed darters; the Etowah darter and Cherokee darter. The area's mixed pine hardwood uplands and mature bottomlands also provide habitat for the threatened northern long-eared bat. Securing this site at the Raccoon Creek headwaters will protect a \$40 million investment by federal, state, and private partners to conserve the high aquatic biodiversity in the Etowah River basin.

Hawai'i

Kalua'aha Ranch Conservation Easement (Maui County) \$500,000.

The Kalua'aha Ranch Conservation Easement on Moloka'i Island will permanently protect 969 acres to support the recovery of numerous endangered species, as well as minimize sedimentation of the near shore ecosystem and the Nation's largest fringing coral reef. Extending from near sea level to over 4,000 feet at the summit of the East Moloka'i Range, upper Kalua'aha Valley has high-quality native forest currently being degraded by feral ungulates resulting in increased sediments flowing

downstream, which smothers the reefs below. The Moloka‘i Land Trust, The Trust for Public Land, and the Hawai‘i Division of Forestry and Wildlife will permanently protect the upper Kalua‘aha Valley via a conservation easement. Surveys of the property have documented three highly endangered native plant species -- one of them having fewer than 50 extant individuals. Kalua‘aha Valley also provides habitat for endangered seabirds such as the Newell’s shearwater that nests in extremely steep valley walls as well as the Hawaiian goose (Nēnē). The Kalua‘aha Stream flows year round and ensures the vitality of the forest and its ability to absorb water will sustain the water supply and clean drinking water for East Moloka‘i.

Iowa

Indiana Bat Summer Habitat Project (Mahaska County) \$250,000.

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources will use this grant to acquire over 224 acres of habitat in Mahaska County for Indiana and northern long-eared bats. The habitat includes approximately 86 acres of mature forest and will be managed to increase the diversity of forest cover in that area. The acquisition will also provide connectivity to other protected lands in the area.

Michigan

Lime Lake Fen & Savanna Conservation Project* (Van Buren County) \$467,000.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy will use this funding to protect a 188-acre parcel of land in Van Buren County that contains essential habitat for the endangered Mitchell’s satyr butterfly, eastern massasauga rattlesnake, a candidate for federal listing, and several state-listed species. The acquisition will permanently protect habitat associated with the third largest population of the Mitchell’s satyr butterfly in Michigan.

Minnesota

Native Prairie Habitat Protection for Dakota Skipper (Pipestone County) \$300,000.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources will permanently protect 100 acres of prairie habitat to support the federally-listed endangered Dakota skipper and Poweshiek skipperling. The acquisition will also protect a critical seed resource for future prairie restoration efforts. The acquisition will be associated with the State of Minnesota’s Wildlife Management Area.

Multi-State

An Ecosystem Approach for Recovery and Protection of Karst-Dependent Federally Listed Species: Phase IV (Oklahoma & Arkansas) \$667,000.

This grant will support a multi-state and multi-regional acquisition program that will result in the permanent protection of a 30-acre tract of land in Delaware County, Oklahoma and three parcels totaling 123 acres in Arkansas. The Oklahoma acquisition is adjacent to TNC’s Twin Cave Preserve which supports a maternity colony of gray bats and a population of Ozark cavefish, both federally-

listed species. Two of the three property tracts in Arkansas are adjacent to the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission's Cave Springs Cave Natural Area. Much of the acquisition area is immediately adjacent to various caves that have federally-listed bat maternity and bachelor colonies, hibernacula, and provide foraging and movement corridors for the bats. Acquisition of these lands will also protect the recharge area for Cave Springs Caves in Arkansas, where over half of the known population of Ozark cavefish occur.

Nebraska

Salt Creek Tiger Beetle Recovery Land Acquisition (Lancaster County) \$206,536.

Nebraska Game and Parks Commission will protect and manage in perpetuity 87 acres of important saline wetlands that are federally designated as critical habitat for the federally and state-listed endangered Salt Creek tiger beetle. Acquiring this property will help slow and reverse the loss of rare and unique wetland habitats used by the Salt Creek tiger beetle, piping plover, interior least tern, and other sensitive wildlife and plant species that use these unique wetland habitats.

New Jersey

Wallkill River Bog Turtle Recovery (Sussex County) \$850,000.

The State of New Jersey will acquire a 220-acre property to permanently protect key habitat for the federally-listed threatened bog turtle. The State of New Jersey Green Acres Program is working with the New Jersey Natural Lands Trust to protect this and adjacent properties in perpetuity.

North Carolina

Beech Creek Slopes Conservation Area (Watauga County) \$200,000.

The grant will enable the acquisition of 183 acres to grow the Beech Creek Slopes Conservation Area in western North Carolina for the benefit of the southernmost population of the endangered Virginia big-eared bat. The site's series of outcrops, cliffs, and caves is home to Virginia big-eared bats during the summer months. Securing this site will protect North Carolina population's primary maternity cave that is used by approximately 300 Virginia big-eared bats. The acquisition also will protect four additional smaller roosts and foraging habitat for the species.

Longleaf Pine Ecosystem Conservation in the North Carolina Cape Fear Arch: Long Ridge Tract (Pender County) \$600,000.

The grant will enable the acquisition of 812 acres of habitat to aid in the recovery of the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker. The site contains over 400 acres of old growth longleaf and old growth mixed pine habitat that is home to at least one active woodpecker cluster and has the potential to support up to four clusters. Securing the site will connect existing protected habitat areas found in the species' Mid-Atlantic Coastal Plain Recovery Unit. The acquisition

will also protect pocosin wetlands and a beaver swamp that provide foraging habitat for the threatened wood stork.

Ohio

Acquisition of Lakeside Daisy Recovery Habitat and a Globally Rare Alvar Ecosystem (Ottawa County) \$1,241,625.

This grant will enable the Ohio Department of Natural Resources to acquire a 115-acre parcel in Ottawa County that provides alvar habitat for the threatened lakeside daisy. The property has the largest, most diverse, and only natural lakeside daisy population in the United States and lies adjacent to the Lakes Daisy State Nature Preserve.

Oregon

Mountcrest Working Forest Conservation Easement (Jackson County) \$1,000,000.

This project will permanently protect 1,751 acres of mature forestland through a conservation easement. The property straddles the Siskiyou Crest that divides the Rogue River and Klamath River watersheds and strategically links the Rogue-Siskiyou National Forest and Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument. The property encompasses critical habitat for the threatened northern spotted owl and is used by Pacific fisher, a species proposed for federal listing, and is the source of cold spring water that contributes to important coho salmon habitat. In addition, this project achieves state and federal goals for climate adaptation and resilience by enhancing landscape-scale connectivity between large blocks of protected lands at mid elevation. Other public benefits include scenic viewsheds from Interstate 5 and adjacent public lands, including the Pacific Crest Trail.

Rogue River Recovery Land Acquisition (Jackson County) \$500,000.

This project will help acquire a 352-acre property, including two miles of Rogue River frontage in Jackson County. Few large parcels of land in such a relatively natural state remain on this stretch of the river. Acquisition by the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy will ensure the site's exceptional natural characteristics will be protected and enhanced in perpetuity. The property provides connectivity between other protected areas and contains multiple threatened landscapes such as a gallery forest, an active, hydrologically-connected floodplain, vernal pools, oak woodland, and chaparral – all threatened landscapes. Over 100 species of birds and 300 vascular plant species are found on the property. Acquisition will permanently protect habitat for the federally-listed endangered large-flowered woolly meadowfoam and Gentner's fritillary as well as the federally-listed threatened vernal pool fairy shrimp. Conservation of the property will ensure that it is not converted to large-lot home sites, as is currently occurring in other areas along the Rogue River.

Texas

Scrappin' Valley Conservation Easement (Newton County) \$570,700.

In partnership with the State of Texas, the Nature Conservancy will use this grant to acquire a 2,105-acre parcel of land that will primarily benefit the red-cockaded woodpecker. Acquisition of this property will permanently protect pristine longleaf pine habitat for the woodpecker and protect 11 active clusters. The property is also located less than one mile from the Sabine National Forest which is currently managed for and supports red-cockaded woodpeckers. The Louisiana pine snake, a candidate for listing, has also been found on the property as recently as 2008. Protection of the property will preserve any remnant populations of Louisiana pine snake and could support potential reintroduction efforts.

Washington

West Rocky Prairie (Thurston County) \$2,000,000.

The West Rocky Prairie acquisition will protect one of the largest available tracts of mima mounded prairie-oak wetland habitat in western Washington. Habitat will be made available to enhance or reintroduce listed Taylor's checkerspot butterfly, Mazama pocket gopher, Oregon spotted frog, golden paintbrush, and water howellia as recommended in the species' recovery plans. The acquisition of this site protects the headwaters of salmon-bearing Allen and Beaver Creeks. This phase of this ongoing project will add a vital parcel to the 3,615-acre conservation network between Millersylvania State Park, McIntosh Tree Farm, Rocky Prairie Natural Area Preserve, and West Rocky Prairie Wildlife Area. Regionally, this property would be one of ten prairies conserved by the South Puget Sound Prairie Landscape Working Group across 105 square miles.

South Puget Sound Prairie Species Conservation (Thurston County) \$600,000.

The South Puget Sound Prairie project will acquire a conservation easement on a 90-acre working farm inhabited by the listed Mazama pocket gopher. Pocket gophers in South Puget Sound inhabit some of the most productive agricultural soils and prime development land. This project will demonstrate that pocket gophers and agriculture can coexist, which would reduce disruption of the local economy. The ability to retain farming and pocket gophers on the same site is an important tool in the recovery toolbox. The target of this conservation easement is habitats with prairie soils. The remainder of the site is either in timber under county tax relief or in wetlands, for which the owner is seeking a NRCS wetland conservation easement. Acquiring a conservation easement on this property will protect the existing population of Mazama pocket gophers and be the first Reserve Priority Area conserved under the multi-agency Mazama Pocket Gopher Reserve System.

Wyoming

Lazy BV Ranch Conservation Easement (Park County) \$710,830.

This grant will be used to purchase a conservation easement to permanently protect 2,557 acres previously occupied by the black-footed ferret and once home to the last recorded wild ferret.

Protection of this ranch will complement over 14,630 acres currently conserved with easements held by the Nature Conservancy nearby and also benefit the grizzly bear and gray wolf.