

# News Release



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## SERVICE SEEKS PROPOSALS FROM STATES FOR 2005 ENDANGERED SPECIES GRANTS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:  
February 23, 2005

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The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is now seeking proposals from states and U.S. territories interested in acquiring land or conducting conservation planning for endangered species. Through the fiscal year 2005 appropriation from Congress, more than \$70.5 million is available to fund planning activities and land acquisition for federally protected species.

“President Bush has made cooperative conservation the cornerstone of our efforts to protect and restore our nation’s wildlife and its habitat,” said Interior Secretary Gale A. Norton. “These grants will empower states and territories to protect vital habitat and work with local communities, private landowners and others to conserve threatened and endangered species.”

The grants, to be awarded in fiscal year 2005 from the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund, are authorized under the Endangered Species Act. This fund provides grants to states and territories to support their participation in a wide array of voluntary conservation projects for listed species, as well as for species that are either proposed or candidates for listing. By law, the state or territory must have a current cooperative agreement with the Service and contribute 25% of the estimated program costs of approved projects, or 10% when two or more states or territories undertake a joint project. The grants are expected to be awarded in summer 2005.

"Conservation grants are among the Service’s most important Federal- State partnership building tools,” said agency Director Steve Williams. “They support State efforts to build and strengthen important cost-effective conservation partnerships with local groups and private landowners to benefit wildlife."

The Service is seeking proposals for the following three Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund categories:

**Recovery Land Acquisition Grants** - These grants provide funds to states and territories for acquisition of habitat for endangered and threatened species in support of approved recovery plans. Acquisition of habitat to secure long term protection is often an essential element of a comprehensive recovery effort for a listed species.

**Habitat Conservation Planning Assistance Grants** - These grants provide funds to states and territories to support the development of Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs), through the support of baseline surveys and inventories, document preparation, outreach, and similar planning activities.

**HCP Land Acquisition Grants** - These grants provide funds to states and territories to acquire land associated with approved HCPs. Grants do not fund the mitigation required of an HCP permittee; instead, they support acquisitions by the State or local governments that complement actions associated with the HCP.

Three examples from the fiscal year 2004 program include:

- In Island County, Washington, a \$187,300 Recovery Land Acquisition grant supports the acquisition of property to benefit the Golden paintbrush, a narrowly distributed plant species that is federally listed as threatened. Vital for species recovery, this property is not only one of 11 remaining sites but also one of the three largest sites on which this plant is found. Acquisition of this property is an important step toward recovery of this species.
- A \$272,500 Habitat Conservation Planning Assistance grant in Tennessee and Kentucky supports the States and their partners in planning for a comprehensive Habitat Conservation Plan for the Northern Cumberlands Area, which is renowned for its biodiversity. The permit will allow the States of Tennessee and Kentucky, working with partners, to implement conservation measures to minimize and mitigate impacts to rare and imperiled species (including freshwater mussels, endangered plants, and two bird species) while allowing authorized activities such as timber harvest and coal mining to occur.
- In Lemhi County, Idaho, a \$660,000 Recovery Land Acquisition grant supports the acquisition of property to benefit bull trout, a fish species that is federally listed as threatened. Property acquisition and project implementation will result in changes in the use of water on the property that would increase surface flow in the Pahsimeroi River and two tributaries (Little Morgan Creek and Big Springs Creek). Acquisition of this property is an important step toward recovery of this species.

For more information about these grants contact: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Consultation, Habitat Conservation Planning, Recovery and State Grants, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Room 420, Arlington, VA 22203, 703-358-2106. Information also can be accessed at <http://endangered.fws.gov/grants/>.

The Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund is identified in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance as number 15.615.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million- acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices, and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American Tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to State fish and wildlife agencies.

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For more information about the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, visit our home page at <http://www.fws.gov>.