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**Secretary Salazar Announces Nearly \$66 Million in Grants to
Conserve Habitat of Threatened and Endangered Species**

WASHINGTON – Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar today announced nearly \$66 million in grants to enable 25 states to work with private landowners, conservation organizations and other partners to protect and conserve the habitat of threatened and endangered species.

The grants, awarded through the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund, will benefit numerous species ranging from the desert tortoise to the Indiana bat.

“These grants are part of our ongoing commitment to work with states and other partners to ensure America’s beautiful land and wildlife are conserved for future generations,” Salazar said. “They provide the means for states to develop the long-term partnerships with landowners and communities necessary to conserve habitat and foster stewardship that will bring species back from the threat of extinction.”

Authorized by Section 6 of the Endangered Species Act, the competitive grants enable states to work with private landowners, conservation groups and other agencies to initiate conservation planning efforts and acquire and protect habitat to support the conservation of threatened and endangered species.

This year, the Cooperative Endangered Species Fund provides approximately \$10 million through the Habitat Conservation Planning Assistance Grants Program, \$41 million through the Habitat Conservation Plan Land Acquisition Grants Program, and \$15 million through the Recovery Land Acquisition Grants Program. The three programs were established to help avoid potential conflicts between the conservation of threatened and endangered species and land development and use.

Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs) are agreements between a landowner and the Service. These agreements allow a landowner to undertake otherwise lawful activities on their property, even if they may result in the death, injury or harassment of a listed species, when that landowner agrees to conservation measures designed to minimize and mitigate the impact of those actions. HCPs may also be developed by a county or state to cover certain activities of all landowners within their jurisdiction and may address multiple species.

Under the HCP Land Acquisition Grants Program, the Service provides grants to states or territories for land acquisition that complements the conservation objectives of approved HCPs. Among recipients of today's HCP Land Acquisition grants is the state of Montana, which is receiving a \$6.0 million grant to acquire 3,600 acres in the Northern Rocky Mountains. The purchase of this acreage will complement the Plum Creek Native Fish Habitat Conservation Plan, protecting high-quality riparian habitat for the bull trout, westslope cutthroat trout and mountain whitefish. Acquiring these lands will link adjacent protected wilderness and roadless areas, which also benefit the grizzly bear, Canada lynx, and gray wolf. This acquisition involves

a model conservation partnership with several diverse parties that have created the momentum for the largest conservation effort in the country, including the Blackfoot Challenge and the even larger initiative to protect as much of the Crown of the Continent as possible.

The HCP Planning Assistance Grants Program provides grants to states and territories to support the development of HCPs through funding of baseline surveys and inventories, document preparation, outreach and similar planning activities. For example, the states of Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Missouri and Ohio will receive a total of \$3,362,364 to assist in the development of a landscape-level, multi-species HCP throughout the states to provide conservation benefits to listed species, while accommodating wind development. The plan will provide a means for wind energy developers to avoid, minimize, mitigate and compensate for adverse effects to protected species. As a part of the HCP, the five states will work in collaboration with Minnesota, Illinois and Wisconsin, the wind industry, and The Conservation Fund to lead a strategic conservation planning process that focuses on integrating species needs with potential habitat mitigation across the landscape.

The Recovery Land Acquisition Grants Program provides funds to states and territories to acquire habitat for endangered and threatened species with approved recovery plans. Habitat acquisition to secure long term protection is often an essential element of a comprehensive recovery effort for a listed species. One of this year's grants will provide \$800,000 to enable the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to acquire a 413-acre tract to protect nesting habitat of the golden-cheeked warbler and black-capped vireo. The property is also expected to benefit the endangered Tobusch fish-hook cactus.

For a complete list of the 2010 grant awards for these programs (Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number 15.615), see the Service's Endangered Species Grants home page at <http://endangered.fws.gov/grants/section6/index.html>.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit **www.fws.gov**.

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