

News Release



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Fish and Wildlife Service Strengthens Work Plan to Restore Biological Priorities and Certainty to Endangered Species Listing Process

The Department of the Interior’s U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) announced today that it is further strengthening a work plan that will allow the agency to focus its resources on the species most in need of protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

An agreement announced today with a frequent plaintiff group builds on a multi-year work plan that the Service filed in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia on May 10, 2011. If approved by the Court, the work plan will enable the agency to systematically, over a period of six years, review and address the needs of more than 250 candidate species to determine if they should be added to the Federal Lists of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants. Consistent with the Service’s objectives and biological priorities, today’s agreement includes additional scheduling commitments for a small subset of the actions in the work plan, which is available online at:

http://www.fws.gov/endangered/improving_ESA/listing_workplan.html.

“For more than 35 years, the Endangered Species Act has prevented the probable extinction of hundreds of species across the Nation and contributed to the recovery of many others,” said Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe. “The ESA represents a commitment to protect and preserve our natural heritage out of a deeply held understanding of the direct link between the health of our ecosystems and our own well-being. This work plan will allow the Service to more effectively focus our efforts on providing the benefits of the ESA to those imperiled species most in need of protection.”

In addition to addressing the needs of candidate species, the work plan and today's agreement, if approved by the Court, will provide state wildlife agencies, stakeholders and the public with clarity and certainty about when listing determinations will be made. With today's agreement with the Center for Biological Diversity and the work plan agreement with WildEarth Guardians, the Service would be able to restore balance to its listing program.

Candidate species are plants and animals for which the Service has sufficient information on their biological status and threats to propose listing them as endangered or threatened under the ESA. The Service maintains a Candidate List that is reviewed and published annually, entitled the Candidate Notice of Review (CNOR).

If the Service determines that listing is warranted for a species, the agency will propose that species for listing and allow the public to review and comment on the proposal before making a final determination. A list of these candidate species is available at

http://www.fws.gov/endangered/improving_ESA/listing_workplan.html

The Endangered Species Act was enacted in 1973 to protect plants and animal species facing extinction. The ESA currently protects more than 1,300 species in the U.S. and about 570 species abroad. The Service's highest priority is to make implementation of the ESA less complex, less contentious, and more effective.

Ensuring that threatened and endangered species continue to be protected and recovered requires effective implementation of the ESA that is responsive to both the needs of imperiled resources and the concerns of citizens. The Service has developed a variety of tools and programs to help landowners fashion a conservation strategy for listed and candidate species that is consistent with their land-management objectives and needs. These tools include Habitat Conservation Plans and Candidate Conservation Agreements that provide regulatory assurance, technical assistance, and a grants program that funds conservation projects by private landowners, states, and territories.

The Service also recently launched a joint effort with NOAA Fisheries Service to identify and implement administrative changes to the Endangered Species Act aimed at accelerating recovery of imperiled species, enhancing on-the-ground conservation delivery, and better engaging the resources and expertise of partners to meet the goals of the ESA.

America's fish, wildlife and plant resources belong to all of us, and ensuring the health of imperiled species is a shared responsibility. To learn more about the Service's Endangered Species program and tools available to landowners, go to <http://www.fws.gov/endangered/>.

To find out more about today's announcement, please visit

<http://www.fws.gov/home/feature/2011/pdf/FWSSStrengthensWorkPlanAgreementFAQs.pdf>.

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. Connect with our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/usfws, follow our tweets at www.twitter.com/usfwshq, watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwshq>.

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