

News Release

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Updated Policy Re-affirms Federal-State Collaboration on Implementing the ESA

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service (together the Services) have updated a long-standing policy on the role of state fish and wildlife agencies in implementing the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The updated policy, developed in coordination with state fish and wildlife agencies, re-affirms the commitment for engagement and collaboration between the Services and state agencies on many aspects of ESA implementation.

Today's announcement builds on the [suite of actions](#) the Administration is taking to improve the effectiveness of the Act and demonstrate its flexibility, including recent process improvements for designating [critical habitat](#).

"State fish and wildlife agencies are essential partners in implementing the Endangered Species Act to protect our most at-risk species across the country," said U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe. "We look forward to continuing our work together on conservation successes that all Americans can be proud of."

"The partnership between state fish and wildlife agencies, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Marine Fisheries Service, is vital to effective conservation delivery in support of the Endangered Species Act," said Dave Chanda, President of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and Director of the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife. "State fish and wildlife agencies are highly appreciative of revisions to this policy that will strengthen collaborative planning, management, and recovery initiatives."

Additionally, the revised policy now references the suite of ESA conservation tools that were not available or in common use when the policy was originally developed in 1994. These tools include Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs), Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances (CCAAs) and Safe Harbor Agreements. More information on these and other tools of the ESA for landowners and citizens can be found at www.fws.gov/Endangered/Landowners/.

Changes to the policy include more proactive conservation of imperiled species before they require protections of the ESA, expanded opportunities for engaging in listing and recovery activities, and improved planning with state agencies across a species' range. States often possess scientific data and expertise on imperiled species within their borders and have close working relationships with local governments and landowners, and as such are critical partners of the Services.

“In our continuing effort to implement the ESA in new and innovative ways, the updates to the policy we’ve announced today help ensure that states are our partners in recovering endangered species,” said Eileen Sobeck, Assistant Administrator for NOAA Fisheries.

The updated policy (“Interagency Policy Regarding the Role of State Agencies in ESA Activities”) will publish in the *Federal Register* on February 22, 2016, and is available at <https://www.federalregister.gov/public-inspection> by clicking on the 2016 Notices link under Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants.

The Endangered Species Act is an essential tool for conserving the nation’s most at-risk wildlife, as well as the land and water on which they depend for habitat. The ESA has prevented more than 99 percent of the species listed from going extinct, serving as the critical safety net for wildlife that Congress intended when it passed the law 40 years ago. In addition, the ESA has helped move many species from the brink of extinction to the path to recovery, including California condors, Florida panthers and whooping cranes. The Obama Administration has delisted more species due to recovery than any prior administration, including the Oregon chub, Virginia northern flying squirrel and brown pelican.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service works with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. For more information, visit www.fws.gov, or connect with us through any of these social media channels: [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Flickr](#), [YouTube](#).

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