



PRESS RELEASE

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December 20, 2013

For Immediate Release

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Service Announces Availability of the Final Revised Recovery Plan for the Black-footed Ferret

DENVER--The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is announcing the availability of the Black-footed ferret Revised Recovery Plan (Plan). The Black-footed ferret (*Mustela nigripes*) (ferret) was historically found throughout the Great Plains, mountain basins, and semi-arid grasslands of North America wherever prairie dogs occurred. The species is listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (Act).

The ferret's close association with prairie dogs is an important factor in its decline. From the late 1800s to approximately the 1960s, conversion of native grasslands to cropland, poisoning, and disease dramatically reduced prairie dog numbers. The ferret population declined precipitously as a result.

"The single, most feasible action that would benefit Black-footed ferret recovery is to improve prairie dog conservation," said Pete Gober, Black-footed ferret recovery coordinator. "If efforts are undertaken to more proactively manage existing prairie dog habitat for ferret recovery, all other threats to the species will be substantially less difficult to address. Down listing of the Black-footed ferret could be accomplished in approximately 10 years if conservation actions continue at existing reintroduction sites and if additional reintroduction sites are established."

The objective of a recovery plan is to provide a framework for the recovery of a species so that protection under the Act is no longer necessary. A recovery plan includes scientific information about the species and provides criteria and actions necessary for the Service to be able to remove it from the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants. Recovery plans do not regulate federal agencies or their partners, but recovery plans are often adopted by federal agencies as sound environmental policy.

Although ferret habitat has been dramatically reduced from historical times, a sufficient amount

remains if its quality and configuration is appropriately managed. This management, for the most part, is likely to be conducted by traditional State, Tribal, and Federal fish and wildlife and land management agencies. Additionally, private parties, including landowners and conservation organizations, must continue to support ferret recovery. Many partners contributing to ferret recovery in many places will help minimize the risk of loss of wild populations.

Specifically, recovery of Black-footed ferrets will depend upon: (1) continued efforts of captive breeding facilities to provide suitable animals for release into the wild; (2) conservation of prairie dog habitat adequate to sustain ferrets in several populations distributed throughout their historical range; and (3) management of sylvatic plague, a disease that can decimate prairie dogs, as well as ferrets.

Information on the Recovery Plan can be found at <http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/mammals/blackfootedferret/>

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 <http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/> Connect with our Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/USFWSMountainPrairie> Follow our tweets at <http://twitter.com/USFWSMtnPrairie> Watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwsmtnpairie/>