



## PRESS RELEASE

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**For Immediate Release**

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### **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Announces Endangered Species *Recovery Champion Award* Winners**

#### ***Wyoming and Utah Residents Honored***

DENVER--The story of endangered species conservation in the United States over the past 40 years involves many heroes. Today, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) recognized 61 of these heroes for their outstanding efforts to conserve and protect endangered and threatened fish, wildlife and plants by designating them 2012 *Recovery Champions*. Among the award winners honored for their work were John Emmerich, Deputy Director of Wyoming Game and Fish Department and Laura Romin, Deputy Field Supervisor with the Service's Utah Ecological Services

"Recovery Champion awards acknowledge individuals and groups who have excelled in their efforts to protect and recover our most imperiled species," said Service Director Dan Ashe. "They exemplify the dedication and determination that has helped save countless animals and plants from extinction and that continues to raise the bar in the field of endangered species conservation."

John Emmerich, Deputy Director of Wyoming Game and Fish Department, is being recognized as an outstanding champion for his contributions to Black-footed ferret recovery. He is past chair of the species' Recovery Implementation Team, under his personal leadership reached new heights within the ~30 person Executive Committee of the recovery team. He has helped initiate several new reintroduction sites; promoted development of a vaccine for sylvatic plague, and developed relationships with partners. Overall, he led the development of a practical vision for what it will take to delist what was once the most endangered mammal in North America.

Laura Romin, Deputy Field Supervisor with the Utah Ecological services Office, is being recognized for her efforts to conserve the threatened Utah prairie dog (UPD). Laura's leadership of Field Office efforts for UPD has created the Utah Prairie Dog Habitat Credit Exchange, a mitigation bank which promotes conservation while providing flexibility for stakeholders. Successful translocation of prairie dogs to a number of U.S. Forest Service lands, the acquisition of over \$2,000,000 in funds for prairie dog habitat purchase from federal agencies including the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Aviation Administration and development of the new UPD Recovery plan and 4(d) special rule.

"This award honors those that go above and beyond in endangered species conservation," said Noreen Walsh, regional director for the Services Mountain-Prairie Region. "The work that these champions do every day to protect America's wildlife is astounding and inspiring. The efforts of John and Laura exemplify that spirit and commitment."

The *Recovery Champion* awards began in 2002 as a one-time recognition for Service staff members for their achievements in conserving listed species. However, in 2007, the program was expanded to honor Service partners as well, recognizing their essential role in the recovery of threatened and endangered species.

For information about the 2012 Recovery Champions, please visit:  
<http://www.fws.gov/endangered/what-we-do/recovery-champions/index.html>.

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, go to <http://www.fws.gov/endangered/>.

*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.*

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