



## **Timeline: Northern Spotted Owl Recovery**

- 1990:** *The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service lists the northern spotted owl under the Endangered Species Act as a threatened species in Washington, Oregon, and California.*
- 1992:** *FWS designates 6.9 million acres of critical habitat in those states, all on federal lands. Critical habitat designations identify areas considered essential for the conservation of the species and that may require special management.*
- 1992:** *FWS releases draft recovery plan. (The plan was not finalized due to the development of the Northwest Forest Plan in 1994.) Recovery plans consolidate scientific information on listed species and guide conservation efforts that help species rebound to the point they no longer need ESA protection.*
- 1993:** *The Forest Ecosystem Management Assessment Team—an interagency, interdisciplinary team of scientists, economists, sociologists, and others—is assembled to craft balanced, comprehensive, and long-term options for the management of more than 24 million acres of federal forestlands within the range of the spotted owl.*
- 1994:** *The Northwest Forest Plan is finalized, in part to guide federal agencies' contribution to spotted owl recovery (it also provides for the conservation of many other late-successional forest-dependent species). The plan amends federal land use plans within 19 National Forests (19.4 million acres) and seven BLM districts (2.7 million acres). Six National Parks (totaling 2 million acres) are also covered under the plan.*
- 1994-2003:** *A variety of lawsuits related to forest management under the Northwest Forest Plan significantly affect Forest Service and BLM timber sales.*
- 2003:** *As part of a settlement agreement for timber industry lawsuits, FWS agrees to conduct a 5-year status review of the spotted owl and consider revising its critical habitat designation.*
- 2004:** *FWS releases a 5-year status review of the spotted owl, including the recommendation that it remain listed in threatened status. The status review report serves as a comprehensive summary of scientific information on the spotted owl.*
- 2006:** *A recovery team is established and a new recovery plan process is initiated.*
- 2007:** *FWS releases a draft recovery plan.*
- 2007:** *FWS proposes a revised critical habitat designation of 5.3 million acres.*

- 2008:** *FWS releases a final recovery plan, identifying habitat loss and competition from encroaching barred owls as the two main threats to the spotted owl.*
- 2008:** *FWS receives critical peer reviews of the recovery plan from leading scientific organizations.*
- 2008:** *FWS finalizes a revised critical habitat designation of 5.3 million acres in Washington, Oregon, and California, all on federal lands.*
- 2008-2009:** *FWS is litigated on recovery plan and critical habitat.*
- 2009:** *FWS releases draft statewide Safe Harbor agreement with the Oregon Department of Forestry and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service to encourage private forest landowners to contribute to spotted owl recovery. (This would be the first Safe Harbor agreement for the spotted owl in Oregon, and would add to the four existing Safe Harbors for the owl—two in Washington and two in California.)*
- 2009:** *FWS seeks public comments on possible experimental removal of encroaching barred owls from certain areas within the range of the spotted owl to determine if such removal benefits spotted owls.*
- 2009:** *FWS requests from federal court voluntary remand of the 2008 recovery plan and critical habitat so that they can be revised to address legal and scientific concerns.*
- 2010:** *FWS initiates targeted scientific revision to the 2008 recovery plan.*
- 2010:** *FWS releases a draft revised survey protocol to improve efforts to locate spotted owl sites in the presence of barred owls. Barred owls suppress spotted owl detection during audio surveys, an important tool for locating spotted owls.*
- 2010:** *In response to FWS's request for voluntary remand, a federal court orders the FWS to revise the 2008 recovery plan and critical habitat designation.*
- 2010:** *FWS finalizes a statewide Safe Harbor agreement with the Oregon Department of Forestry and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, the first Safe Harbor for the spotted owl in Oregon.*
- 2010:** *FWS releases a draft revision to the 2008 recovery plan. The draft plan is made available for a 90-day public review and comment period. Nearly 12,000 public comments are received.*
- 2011:** *FWS provides an additional 30-day public review and comment period on an updated appendix related to habitat modeling from the draft revised recovery plan. About 20 public comments are received.*

**2011:** *FWS releases a final revised recovery plan with three overarching recommendations: protect the best of the spotted owl's remaining habitat, revitalize forests through active management, and reduce competition from the encroaching barred owl.*

### ***On the Horizon***

- Ø *A draft Environmental Impact Statement on experimental removal of barred owls from select portions of the spotted owl's range will be made available for public review and comment in early 2012.*
- Ø *A proposed revised critical habitat designation will be made available for public review and comment in early 2012.*
- Ø *An economic analysis on the proposed revised critical habitat designation will be available for public review and comment in April 2012.*
- Ø *A final revised critical habitat designation will be completed by November 15, 2012.*

***Updated 1/19/2012***