



## 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.*
- 1991:** *FWS proposes 11.6 million acres of critical habitat in the three states on federal, state, tribal, and private lands. The proposed designation does not include about 2 million acres of suitable habitat on Congressionally reserved lands such as national parks and wilderness areas because timber harvest is prevented on those lands. (Critical habitat designations identify areas considered essential for the conservation of the species and that may require special management.)*
- 1992:** *FWS designates 6.9 million acres of critical habitat in the three states, all on federal lands. (Proposed critical habitat designations are often larger than final ones because other factors are taken into account to refine proposals before they are finalized. After identifying areas essential for the conservation of the species and that may require special management, the FWS considers factors such as the economic impacts of proposals and conservation measures already in place that may preclude the need for designating certain areas.)*
- 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 Bureau of Land Management districts (2.7 million acres). Six National Parks (totaling 2 million acres) are also covered under the plan.*
- 1994-present:** *A variety of lawsuits significantly affect U.S. 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 as a threatened species. The status review report serves as a comprehensive summary of scientific information on the spotted owl and highlights the increasing threat posed by the encroaching barred 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, all on federal lands, based on the draft recovery plan process.*
- 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 negative peer reviews of the recovery plan from leading scientific organizations (The Wildlife Society, the American Ornithologists' Union, and the Society of Conservation Biology). Specific recommendations include the need to conserve larger amounts of high quality habitat, including some on state and private lands, and using updated scientific modeling tools and analyses.*
- 2008:** *FWS finalizes a revised critical habitat designation of 5.3 million acres, all on federal lands.*
- 2008:** *As part of a review of 20 Endangered Species Act decisions prior to 2009, the Interior Department's Inspector General issues a report concluding that the integrity of the decision-making process for the spotted owl recovery plan was potentially jeopardized by improper political influence.*
- 2008-2009:** *FWS is litigated on recovery plan and critical habitat.*
- 2009:** *FWS begins public scoping 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 scientific and legal concerns.*
- 2010:** *In response to FWS's request for voluntary remand, a federal court orders the agency to revise the 2008 recovery plan and critical habitat designation. FWS initiates revisions to the 2008 recovery plan, including use of updated scientific modeling tools and analyses.*

- 2010:** *FWS, the Oregon Department of Forestry, and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service finalize the first Safe Harbor agreement for the spotted owl in Oregon, and the first statewide Safe Harbor for the spotted owl, to encourage private forest landowners to contribute to spotted owl recovery. This agreement adds to four existing Safe Harbors for the owl.*
- 2010:** *FWS releases a draft revision to the 2008 recovery plan. The draft plan is made available for a total of 120 days of public review and comment. Nearly 12,000 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.*
- 2012:** *FWS releases a revised critical habitat proposal for the spotted owl of 13.9 million acres on federal, state, and private lands. The agency proposes to exclude 3.3 million of the 13.9 million acres in the final critical habitat designation because of conservation measures already in place that support spotted owl recovery. The designation will be finalized by November 15, 2012.*
- 2012:** *FWS releases draft Environmental Impact Statement on experimental removal of barred owls from select areas of the spotted owl's range. The draft EIS outlines 8 potential courses of action (including one option to take no action) varying by location, duration, removal method, and cost. The EIS may be finalized by late 2012.*



**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Oregon Fish and Wildlife Office**  
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- ◆ We promote healthy Northwestern ecosystems that sustain wildlife and people.
- ◆ We seek common ground with public and private partners and citizens to advance conservation and support the well-being of Oregon communities.
- ◆ We meet modern conservation challenges with pragmatic, future-focused approaches that consider the broader natural and social landscape.

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