

# News Release



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## **Plan Sets Course for Recovery of Vernal Pool and Wet Meadow Ecosystems In Southwestern Oregon**

Today, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service released a final recovery plan to address the survival needs of the vernal pool fairy shrimp and two rare plant species found only in Oregon's Rogue Basin. Fewer than 20 percent of endangered vernal pool systems remain in the Rogue Valley. Similarly, much of the Illinois Valley wet meadow habitat has declined due to forest encroachment from the lack of natural fire in the area.

This ecosystem-based recovery plan covers three listed species under the Endangered Species Act and recommends conservation strategies for seven additional rare species. The three listed species in the plan include vernal pool fairy shrimp, Cook's desert parsley, and large-flowered woolly meadowfoam. The other seven rare species include Austin's popcorn flower, dwarf woolly meadowfoam, Greene's popcorn flower, Henderson's bentgrass, slender meadowfoam, winged water-starwort, and a newly discovered aquatic invertebrate species, the Agate Desert water flea.

All species included in the recovery plan are native to southwestern Oregon and limited to seasonally wet habitats. The species are threatened by habitat loss as well as competition from native and non-native plants. The two listed plants and the vernal pool fairy shrimp, along with the other rare species mentioned in the plan, all occur within the Agate Desert of the Rogue River Valley plains in Jackson County and are associated with vernal pools. Cook's desert parsley is also found in the Illinois Valley wet meadow and mixed forest habitat of neighboring Josephine County. Recovery of these species will be determined by population status, area, and the likelihood they can withstand environmental and human impacts.

A strategy for recovering the threatened vernal pool fairy shrimp was addressed earlier in the Recovery Plan for Vernal Pool Ecosystems of California and Southern Oregon, which was published on March 7, 2006. This newly released Recovery Plan for Rogue and Illinois Valley Vernal Pool and Wet Meadow Ecosystems provides local refinements to recovery actions of the 2006 plan.

“We’re working in partnership with a variety of local organizations to restore habitat and give these species a real chance of recovery,” said Paul Henson, State Supervisor for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Oregon Fish and Wildlife Office. “With our local partnerships, we are hopeful the species will make a comeback.”

Recovery plans are non-regulatory and advisory; they are road maps federal agencies and partners use to improve the status of imperiled species. In addition to providing a synthesis of current knowledge and science for listed species, recovery plans help direct efforts and resources toward conservation of rare species and their habitats. Recovery plans do not obligate the expenditure of funds or require that the recommended actions be implemented.

The plan’s overall goal is to achieve viable populations of listed species and to proactively avoid future listing of the other rare species referred to in the plan. The plan establishes recovery zones, recommends specific protection, and identifies restoration activities to maintain or improve the habitat quality of the three listed species, along with the other rare species. The plan also provides a monitoring approach to help identify population trends and conservation measures so as to assess when a species can be delisted. If the recommended recovery actions are fully implemented under this plan, it is anticipated that the species could be removed from the list by 2032.

The plan focuses on restoring and protecting many of the known populations and remnant habitat in the Rogue Basin. Since many of the populations occur on private lands, private landowners can play a significant role in recovery. For example, The Partners for Fish and Wildlife program, Habitat Conservation Plans, and Safe Harbor Agreements, are all voluntary, non-regulatory avenues to help private landowners contribute to endangered species recovery.

The vernal pool fairy shrimp is a translucent “shrimp-like” aquatic crustacean that has delicate elongate bodies up to three-quarters of an inch in length and eleven pairs of swimming legs. Cook’s desert parsley is a six- to 20-inch tall perennial plant that produces several clusters of pale yellow flowers during the spring and has smooth, glossy bluish-green leaves. The large-flowered woolly meadowfoam grows up to six inches tall and has cream-colored flowers that appear as whitish foam in the springtime. Both plants are important to a host of pollinators, such as honeybees, butterflies, and beetles and contribute to a healthy vernal pool and wet meadow ecosystem.

The final Recovery Plan for the Rogue and Illinois Valley Vernal Pool and Wet Meadow Ecosystems is available through the Fish and Wildlife Service's website at <http://www.fws.gov/oregonfwo/FieldOffices/Roseburg>, or by calling the Fish and Wildlife Service's Roseburg Field Office at 541-957-3474.

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