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News Release



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Recovery Plan for Northern Spotted Owl to Be Developed

An independent contractor will not lead the process as earlier planned

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced today it will develop a recovery plan for the northern spotted owl but will not hire an independent contractor to lead the effort.

Notice went out yesterday via the federal solicitation website (www.fedbizopps.gov, Solicitation # 101816R060) that an earlier solicitation for an independent contractor was being terminated due to a lack of funds. The notice did not clarify that the Service still intends to complete a recovery plan for the northern spotted owl, a threatened species protected under the federal Endangered Species Act.

Due to federal rules, the Service cannot disclose how many offers it received from contractors or their amounts. However, the cost of using an independent contractor to lead the process would be significantly higher than having the process led by a project manager within the Fish and Wildlife Service.

“Given our limited resources, we feel this is the best way to proceed,” said Dave Allen, Director of the Service’s Pacific Region.

The recovery plan will be developed by a recovery team made up of representatives of the Fish and Wildlife Service, the states of Oregon, Washington and California, the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The Fish and Wildlife Service will appoint the members of the new recovery team, which will replace the original recovery team that developed a draft recovery plan for the northern spotted owl in 1992.

The Recovery Team will work with existing materials to develop the recovery plan. Examples of these materials include the December 1992 Final Draft Recovery Plan for the Northern Spotted Owl, the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP), Sustainable Ecosystems Institute's (SEI's) "Scientific Evaluation of the Status of the Northern Spotted Owl" report, results of the Service's November 2004 Northern Spotted Owl 5-year review, the Northern Spotted Owl Demographic Report (final), and the NWFP 10-year Status and Trends Monitoring Report. The availability of these recent comprehensive scientific reviews is expected to allow the completion of this recovery plan in an expedited manner.

The focus of the recovery team will be seeking information on land management practices to meet scientific goals. There will be an opportunity for public review and comment, and the recovery plan will be peer-reviewed before being finalized in late 2007.

The northern spotted owl was listed as threatened in 1990 and a draft recovery plan was published in 1992. That plan was not completed due to the development of the Northwest Forest Plan in 1994, which became the cornerstone for conserving and recovering the northern spotted owl on 24.4 million acres of federal land in Oregon, Washington and California.

The Northwest Forest Plan, however, only addresses northern spotted owl conservation on federal land and it does not establish criteria for measuring whether the species has recovered. The new recovery plan will address what is needed to recover the species throughout its range, including federal and non-federal land, and will set specific recovery criteria.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

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