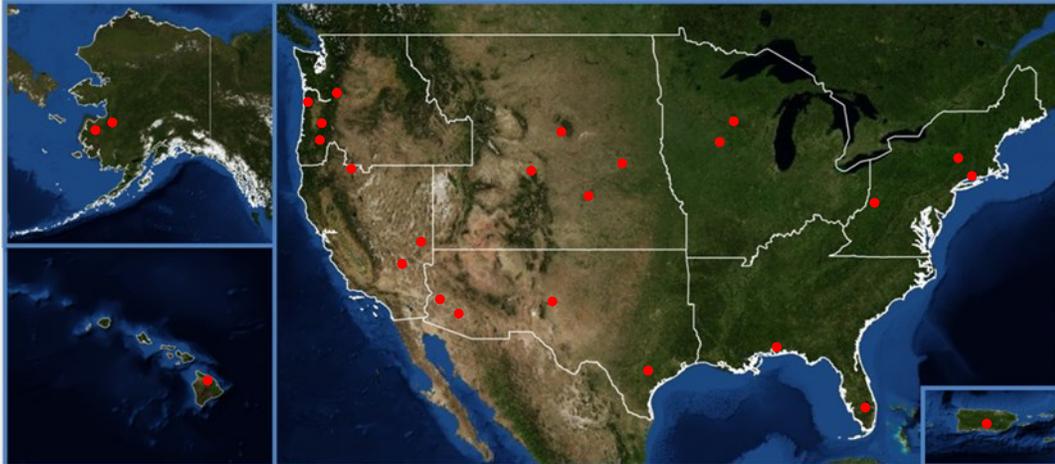




## Cooperative Recovery Initiative

The Cooperative Recovery Initiative (CRI) was established to restore and recover federally listed species on National Wildlife Refuges and surrounding lands. CRI is cross-programmatic, combining resources of the National Wildlife Refuge System, Ecological Services, Partners for Fish and Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquatic Conservation, Migratory Birds and Science Applications to implement large-scale conservation efforts to address threatened and endangered species' priorities.



- \* CRI projects implement actions necessary to delist, downlist, or prevent extinction of threatened and endangered species
- \* CRI has funded 27 projects throughout the country since 2013
- \* All CRI projects require monitoring to evaluate project success
- \* Many CRI projects have ancillary benefits that positively impact candidate and other species of concern

### A Diversity of Partnerships

CRI projects collaborate internally across Service programs, but many projects also partner with entities beyond our agency. In Region 1, a CRI project aiming to delist the golden paintbrush and restore native prairie is doing just that.



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The Center for Natural Lands Management and the Sustainability in Prisons Project have partnered to establish a native plant nursery program in the South Puget Sound area. The nursery produces hundreds of pounds of prairie seed mix and grows 400,000 prairie plants for native prairie restoration. This program is also impacting people's lives more directly. The nursery employs military veterans to process seeds, manage seed farms, and propagate plants at the nursery. Additionally, the program works with local prison inmates to teach valuable life skills. These inmates gain technical horticultural experience while contributing to conservation efforts of the prairie ecosystem in the Pacific Northwest.

The Service, and CRI, encourages a diversity of partnerships. This particular partnership provides an opportunity to impact the lives of fellow citizens while fulfilling our agency mission.



Photo: FWS

Nearly 600 children participated in planting Lupine in Region 5. The Karner blue butterfly (KBB) relies on Lupine to complete its life cycle and is a critical element to the KBB's recovery.



Photo: FWS

Captive-bred Steller's eiders will be released at the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta NWR using a variety of methods to assess the most effective release protocol. Developing a successful reintroduction program is an essential step in establishing a self-sustaining, breeding population.



Photo: FWS

More than 1,000 acres of upland habitat was burned to expand recovery efforts of the dusky gopher frog at the Mississippi Sandhill Crane NWR.



## Project Highlights

A CRI project funded in 2013 is working in the Rainwater Basin of Nebraska, an important migration stop-over habitat for the endangered whooping crane and other migratory bird species. The project team is enhancing the watershed by restoring wetlands that have historically been modified for agricultural uses. Once a common practice, irrigation pits were used to collect water during rain events. These unused pits are now preventing water from reaching wetlands. By filling the pits, the hydrologic function is being restored to critical wetland habitat. To date, 96 pits have either been or are in the process of being filled, involving collaboration with 67 landowners. This effort has impacted 1,644 wetland acres.

The Service is committed to recovering the critically endangered whooping crane. The effort is national in scope, from the captive propagation occurring at Patuxent NWR in the mid-Atlantic to the restoration of wintering habitat on the Gulf Coast. This CRI project is contributing to the Service's landscape-level conservation effort, connecting Service actions across the species' range.



Photo: FWS

The Florida Grasshopper Sparrow was listed as endangered in 1986 due to loss and degradation of suitable habitat. A 2014 CRI funded project is working to increase habitat, not only in the Everglade Headwaters NWR, but also beyond the refuge. With 75% of the remaining dry-prairie habitat occurring on privately owned land, it is critical to engage those landowners in order to recover this species.



Photo: FWS

This year, project leaders worked directly with landowners to conduct surveys on private land. Approximately 26 birds were detected and 22 were captured, banded, and measured for data collection. Additionally, vegetation site evaluations were completed at several sites and monitoring initiated, as this sparrow is a very habitat-specific species.

The project team will continue to provide assistance to landowners and recommend best management practices to support suitable habitat. The team will be engaging more landowners in the area to continue efforts to prevent extinction of this species.

A 2014 CRI funded project is working towards recovery population goals of the endangered black-footed ferret by reintroducing a population at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR. A major threat to the recovery effort of this species is the sylvatic plague. Black-footed ferrets, and their primary prey prairie dogs, are susceptible to plague outbreaks. The team will control the threat of a plague outbreak by treating reintroduction sites with an insecticide that targets fleas, the primary vector of the disease.



Photo: FWS

Phase 1 of the project, an insecticide dusting on 2,585 acres of prairie dog management zones, was completed in 2014. This area will be treated again in the spring of 2015 to ensure that the flea population is subdued. The team is on schedule for the black-footed ferret reintroductions at Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR in the fall of 2015.