

# Obtaining a Scientific Recovery Permit under the Endangered Species Act and Frequently Asked Questions Pertaining to Rusty Patched Bumble Bee (*Bombus affinis*) Recovery Permits

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

April 21, 2025

The FWS Endangered Species program, located in each of our Regional offices, issues permits of three basic types: Incidental take permits, enhancement of survival permits, and **recovery** and interstate commerce permits. We issue **recovery permits** to allow permittees to take listed species as part of their activities intended to foster the recovery of those species. **A typical use of a recovery permit is to allow for scientific research on a listed species in order to understand better the species' long-term survival needs.**

## Do I need a permit?

- If a person is conducting research activities within known areas that could result in take of *Bombus affinis* (even if *B. affinis* is not the target species), we suggest they apply for a recovery permit.

## How do I obtain a recovery permit?

- Apply online at <https://www.fws.gov/service/permits>. Login or create an account and then use the Search Applications feature to search for the application for "Scientific Purposes, Enhancement of Propagation, or Survival Permits (i.e., Recovery Permits)" and follow the instructions for endangered and threatened species native to the United States (form 3-200-59) to submit your application online.
- The former permit application form 3-200-55 is labeled obsolete and should no longer be used.
- Most permits are issued by the Service's regional office (<https://www.fws.gov/about/regions>) where the activity will take place.
- It takes at least 90 days to obtain a permit after you submit an application, so the USFWS encourages applicants to apply as early as possible.

## What are the surveyor qualifications to obtain a permit?

- In order to be qualified to survey for *B. affinis*, an individual must meet the following criteria:
  - Receipt of a four-year university or college degree in a natural science (noted in resume).
  - Demonstrated ability to complete species surveys and resulting technical reports.
  - Demonstrated ability to use aerial nets, or vials to capture bees. Detail experience with aerial nets or vials, including (close approximation is fine) how many surveys and how many years you have used these techniques.
  - *Bombus* identification skills.
  - Experience conducting the specific activities requested (e.g., experience conducting non-lethal DNA sampling of *Bombus* or other bees, experience tagging *Bombus* or other bees, experience with non-lethal pollen or pathogen sampling).
- To document that s/he meets these criteria, we ask that the individual submit the following supporting documents to accompany application materials submitted. Application forms and instructions on how to apply for recovery permits can be found online (<https://www.fws.gov/service/permits>).

- A resume documenting education and work/volunteer experience. Please include the following information on your resume or as an attachment:
- Citations of technical reports or published studies that contains an example of the individual's previous survey work, in particular, citations of reports that document your work with *Bombus* or other bees.
- List any survey work (including dates, location, relevant techniques used, and supervisor) in which you surveyed for *Bombus*, other bees, or listed species. Note if you independently identified *Bombus* species.
- Documentation of *Bombus* identification skills (e.g., details of a bee identification workshop that was attended or taught).
- Documentation of successfully implementing non-lethal marking techniques with negligible injury on *Bombus* species, if mark-release of *B. affinis* is a desired activity.
- Documentation of successfully implementing non-lethal DNA sampling, non-lethal pathogen sampling, non-lethal pollen sampling, training dogs to conduct nest detection or other techniques with negligible injury on *Bombus* species, if any of these techniques are requested activities.
- If applicable, list any Federal Permit numbers and names of Permit holders that you worked under, even if for other (non-*Bombus*) taxa.
- Two letters of recommendation from agency or academic staff pertaining directly to the taxa for which the individual wishes to be considered.

#### How does the USFWS determine whether to issue a scientific recovery permit or not?

- In determining whether to issue a scientific recovery permit, the FWS must consider and understand the following (50 CFR 17.22 (a)(2)):
  - whether the purpose for which the permit is required is adequate to justify removing from the wild or otherwise changing the status of the rusty patched bumble bee;
  - the probable direct and indirect effects that issuing the permit would have on the wild populations of the rusty patched bumble bee;
  - whether the permit, if issued, would conflict with any known programs intended to enhance the survival of the rusty patched bumble bee;
  - whether the purpose for which the permit is required would be likely to reduce the threat of extinction of the rusty patched bumble bee;
  - the opinions or views of scientists or other persons or organizations who have expertise concerning the species or other matters germane to the application; and,
  - whether the expertise, facilities, or other resources available to the applicant appear adequate to successfully accomplish the objectives stated in the application.

#### What are the reporting requirements?

- Annual reporting requirements will be stated in your permit.
- We require permit holders to report data in the format of the “Data Reporting Spreadsheets” located on the rusty patched bumble bee webpage (Data Reporting Spreadsheets available here <https://www.fws.gov/media/rusty-patched-bumble-bee-reporting-form>). Please check this website frequently to ensure you are using the most up-to-date form.

#### What to do if you find *B. affinis* (e.g., in a previously undocumented location)?

- Reporting requirements will be stated in your permit. Notify FWS as soon as reasonably possible.