

DRAFT AND PREDECISIONAL – DO NOT RELEASE

We intend to employ an analytical framework to structure this analysis; this framework is described in great detail below. This analytical framework will incorporate the principles in this document and adhere to the guiding principles. The analytical framework will involve varying levels of analysis depending on the relative importance to species persistence of the factor being evaluated as well as its relative importance to the conservation status of the species. For example, the Service anticipates a much more in depth level of analysis for the small number of threats described above and any other threats determined to be the most important to the status of the species.

Predictions of threats, conservation actions, and regulatory actions will be projected into the future using an analytical framework to provide a greater degree of resolution than was portrayed in the 2010 finding. All of this will be cast in the form of abundance and distribution both now and into the future. The exact metric has yet to be developed but examples might be percent of populations persisting over time or percent distribution or possibly some index of habitat fragmentation in to the future. At this time, we do not believe that bird numbers or habitat acres are the appropriate predictors of the overall species status and its likely persistence into the future. The Service anticipates deploying a number of analytical methods including spatially explicit models, expert elicitations on specific subjects, internal decision analysis frameworks as well as other methods that may arise in the process. The spatially explicit modelling will focus on current and future changes to threats and conservation actions, using the COT spatial geography and population data to project various outcomes, as measured by abundance and distribution. The Service anticipates that this will be the highest level of effort and will be used on those threats that have been identified as the most important drivers for the conservation of the species (long-term persistence). These include at a minimum include; invasive species and fire; energy development and associated infrastructure (including oil, gas, and extractable minerals); and habitat conversion due to tilled agriculture. This will allow the Service to look at risk to the highest concentrations of birds in the most important landscapes and begin to put anticipated biological outcomes into the context of the policy framework relative to the definitions of threatened and endangered. The remaining threats from the COT report, 2010 finding and any other information provided will be evaluated and assessed within the framework of impacts to species, populations, PACs and individuals in the species report.

Given the number of threats and the uncertainty around those threats into the future, as well as the evaluation of regulatory and non-regulatory conservation actions, we expect this will result in a wide range of inputs that will result in a wide range of outcomes regarding various levels of abundance and distribution to evaluate. These various outcomes, along with the qualitative evaluation of other threats and conservation actions, would be the basis of a structured discussion regarding reasonableness, risk, exposure to threats, and the likelihood of the species persisting and to what degree into the future.

We anticipate using a structured process and some form of decision workshop (or multiple workshops if needed) in order to present, evaluate, analyze, and discuss the best available information; consider risk, exposure to threats and likelihood of persistence; apply appropriate policies (listable entity, including DPS); consider the information available in terms of the definitions of threatened or endangered (not threatened or endangered, SPR, foreseeable future); and formulate a decision recommendation.