

Cooperative Recovery Initiative: FY2016 Qualifying Criteria

The funding for this Initiative supports a cross-programmatic approach to complete restoration and management actions addressing current threats to endangered and threatened species on and around National Wildlife Refuges. The Initiative focuses on implementing recovery actions for species near delisting or reclassification from endangered to threatened, and actions that are urgently needed for critically endangered species. Working within the Strategic Habitat Conservation (SHC) framework, and in consultation with Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs), the US Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) combines the resources of the National Wildlife Refuge System, the Ecological Services Program, the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, the Fish and Aquatic Conservation Program, the Science Applications Program and the Migratory Bird Program to identify and implement the highest priority recovery projects. All funding for this initiative is awarded through a competitive proposal and review process to Service-based projects that best address the following criteria.

Qualifying Criteria

1. **Qualifying Projects must address the implementation of recovery actions** for species near delisting or reclassification from endangered to threatened (Showing Success) or recovery actions that are urgently needed to stabilize a critically endangered species (Preventing Extinction). CRI projects should closely align with and help to implement species' recovery plans, or other associated plans such as Comprehensive Conservation Plans, Habitat Conservation Plans, Recovery Outlines, Five Year Reviews, etc. Proposals should explicitly describe how they will achieve established recovery criteria and/or recovery actions or address specific management activities listed on other plans.
 - Showing Success projects should, within three to five years of initial funding, lead directly to achieving the delisting or downlisting criteria for a species as detailed in the species' recovery plan (or associated plans), or show demonstrable success toward achieving those criteria. *For example:*
 - *The FY2014 Columbian White-tailed Deer project (R1) proposed to "meet and exceed the CWTD delisting criteria and begin a delisting proposal by December 31, 2016," by achieving specific objectives identified in the species' recovery plan.*
 - *The FY2014 Karner Blue Butterfly project (R5) proposed to contribute to meeting the recovery criteria for the species by achieving one minimum viable population of adults, in addition to other recovery actions.*
 - *The FY2014 Black-footed Ferret project (R6) proposed to establish a self-sustaining population to directly address one of the downlisting criterion for this species, and "contribute 20 percent of the number of populations required for downlisting."*
 - Preventing Extinction projects should, within three to five years of initial funding, show demonstrable success toward reducing the likelihood of extinction of a critically endangered species through actions consistent with the species' recovery plan (or associated plans). Priority will be given to projects that can lead to population sustainability. *For example:*

- *The FY2014 Devil’s Hole Pupfish project (R8) proposed to establish and manage two captive populations as “backup populations” to the only wild population of the species.*
 - *The FY2013 Hawaiian plants project (R1) proposed to secure native habitat from ungulates and control invasive species to preserve critically endangered plant species, doubling the number of known individuals of many species.*
- If a species does not have an approved recovery plan in place, the proposed CRI activities should be described in the recovery outline, 5-year review recommendations, action plan, Comprehensive Conservation Plan, or other management plan for the species. *For example:*
- *The FY2015 Bartrem’s Scrub-hairstreak and Florida Leafwing butterflies project (R4) proposed habitat enhancements to prevent local extinction of the (recently listed) species, consistent with the draft recovery outline initial action plan (IAP).*

2. Qualifying Projects must address one or more qualifying species with a close nexus to lands of the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS).

- While projects do not need to be located any particular distance from a refuge, project activities should be consistent with management goals of the NWRS. The proximity to the refuge lands should be dependent on the natural history needs and landscape level functionality for the target species.
- Qualifying lands include Refuges, waterfowl production areas, coordination areas, and NWRS held easement areas, as well as Wetland Management Districts, National Monuments and Marine National Monuments.
- Most successful CRI projects take place at least in part on or adjacent to refuges, though many have a private lands component as well. *For example:*
- *The FY 2013 Florida Grasshopper Sparrow project (R4) proposed to improve habitat within the Everglades Headwaters NWR and work with private landowners to assess populations and enhance habitat on adjacent ranches, including lands targeted for acquisition.*
 - *The FY 2014 Whooping Crane project (R6) proposed working with private landowners to fill unused irrigation pits surrounding Waterfowl Production Areas, to provide migration habitat for the species around the Rainwater Basin Wetland Management District.*
 - *The FY 2015 Lesser Prairie Chicken project (R6) proposed to restore and enhance habitat on private lands and establish partnerships with landowners near refuge lands.*
 - *The FY 2015 Puritan Tiger Beetle project (R5) proposed to restore beach habitat and establish two populations of the puritan tiger beetle in New England on state lands in Connecticut, in close coordination with the local refuge.*

3. Qualifying Projects must include a clearly described monitoring component.

- Qualifying projects must describe the parameters that will be monitored, how progress towards reaching objectives will be measured, and how project participants and beneficiaries will participate in these activities.
- Projects must carefully consider where data will be stored, when data will be analyzed, and who will do the analysis. All data management needs must be adequately reflected in the monitoring budget.
- Links to monitoring protocols and/or supporting publications, documents, or methodologies and SOPs must be provided, and should be uploaded into ServCat and entered into PRIMR if applicable.
- Note: a separate monitoring template is no longer required.

Frequently Asked Questions

What types of activities qualify for CRI?

- Successful CRI proposals have included a wide variety of project activities designed to achieve species' recovery goals. Some common activities include (but are not limited to) habitat restoration and vegetation management, captive breeding and/or translocation, invasive species or predator controls, barrier removals, and water management activities.
- In some cases, surveys and monitoring efforts that directly contribute to achieving a species' recovery criteria have also qualified. *For example:*
- *The 2014 Iowa Pleistocene Snail project (R3) proposed to conduct systematic surveys of potential habitat in an attempt to determine whether sites were still occupied, and thus whether delisting criteria has been met.*
- *The 2014 Spectacled Eider project (R7) proposed to generate accurate estimates of breeding population size through aerial surveys, in order to determine whether delisting criteria has been met.*
 - In general, baseline monitoring efforts, ecological studies, experimental manipulations, and feasibility studies generally do not meet the qualifying criteria.

What can CRI funds be used for?

- CRI is an internal initiative and funds are only available for Service-initiated projects. The funding can be used for contract services but cannot be transferred to another Federal Agency unless it is specifically for contract services in support of the funded project.
- Funding can be requested for two years of management or field work and one to three (additional) years of monitoring.
- CRI funds can be used for a variety of project activities including (but not limited to) most supplies and equipment, travel costs, monitoring activities, data analysis, external contracts, term or temporary employees, conservation easements and other payments to private landholders.
- CRI funds may not be used for the purchase of vehicles, to fund permanent staff positions, for most baseline data surveys, or for fee-title land acquisition. CRI will not provide funding to projects for species for which a regulatory change is already anticipated.

Additional guidelines

- While CRI projects are intended to focus on refuge and surrounding lands, projects should also be planned within the larger context of Service landscape conservation priorities. Project scope can be restricted geographically to a small area, but projects should also be aligned with and support larger landscape-scale goals.
 - *For example, creating breeding ponds that only occur in a few locations on a refuge could contribute to the landscape goal of restoring surface water availability within a larger watershed.*
- Similarly, while CRI projects should be able to show meaningful progress toward meeting recovery goals within a short time frame, the long-term sustainability of project goals, activities and outcomes should be carefully considered. Project objectives should be established in the context of ongoing and projected climate change and related stressors.
 - *For example, restoring coastal habitat likely to be degraded due to sea-level rise in the coming decades would not have a high potential for lasting success.*
- Project proposals will also be reviewed on additional criteria, including the applicants' qualifications, a cost-benefit of proposed activities, and cross-program coordination and partnerships. Please see the CRI Reviewer Guidelines for a full description of how the National Review Team will evaluate each Cooperative Recovery Initiative proposal.