U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Washington Ecological Services

2022-2026 Final Strategic Plan

Message from the State Supervisor

Here in the Washington Ecological Services office, we are tasked with conserving the species and habitats that make this part of the country so unique and such a wonderful place to experience. Though we have had great conservation successes in Washington State on several fronts in recent years, significant challenges remain and are anticipated. In order to address large and complex threats such as climate change, invasive species, and habitat loss, we must focus our efforts toward clearly defined goals and seek to expand and deepen partnerships to succeed. We must prioritize and leverage our finite capacity to address these challenges for the benefit of current and future generations.

I am excited to present our Washington Ecological Services five-year strategic plan to guide and focus our actions and capacity in the years ahead. It will serve as a road map to ensure that we make meaningful and measurable progress in our conservation mission, our partnerships, and with our team. What perhaps inspires me most about what appears in the following pages is its origin. The priorities and objectives outlined in each Zone and Program chapter did not originate from our leadership, but rather came directly from each and every member of our statewide team through numerous group conversations and drafting sessions. This process is representative of our commitment to an empowered and proficient workforce, the foundation for achieving our conservation goals.

We look forward to working with our many colleagues and partners to implement this new strategic plan for the benefit of our trust resources, our communities, and the ecosystems on which we all depend.

Brad Thompson
State Supervisor,
Washington Ecological Services
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Washington Ecological Services
2022-2026 Strategic Plan

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Department of the Interior

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Introduction

Purpose and Intent

The purpose of this Strategic Plan (Plan) for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Washington Ecological Services Field Office (WA-ES) is to provide a framework that guides our conservation actions, support and development of our workforce and engagement with others throughout the five-year period of fiscal year 2022 through fiscal year 2026. The Plan will allow us to strategically address current and future challenges in a manner that maximizes conservation benefits. The Plan will inform how we prioritize and approach our work, and how we can use the resources available to us (funding, authorities, regulatory tools, team expertise, partnerships, and community relationships) to achieve the priority outcomes identified. It is envisioned as a living document that will be adaptively managed and adjusted to meet new conservation opportunities and challenges.

The following pages begin with an introduction to the mission of the USFWS, followed by the Ecological Services program authorities and our regional vision. To home in on how the WA-ES Office will both support the national and regional goals, while empowering our team to focus efforts on program and local needs, we present our WA-ES statewide vision, statewide priorities and objectives, and operating principles. In addition, we have included the priority outcomes, objectives and strategies identified by our office's six cross-program biological Zone teams and our statewide Coordinators and Administrative and Budget Services teams. Our intent is that this statewide and team-based strategic focus will allow for more innovative and integrated approaches to conservation.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Mission

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's mission is to work with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

Ecological Services Program Authorities

Through a series of laws created over the last century, Americans have declared that we need to collectively protect landscapes, fish, wildlife, and plants. Several agencies in the federal government put our country's conservation laws into action, and the Ecological Services Program of the USFWS helps lead the way.

We administer the Endangered Species Act, working with experts in the scientific community to identify species on the verge of extinction and to build the road to recovery to bring them back. We work with our partners in federal and state agencies, tribes, local governments, the business community, and private citizens, to help protect important habitat, and help increase species' populations and reduce the threats to their survival so that they can be removed from federal protection.

To better understand these wild places, we map, monitor, and inventory our nation's wetlands. We provide guidance and expertise to protect wildlife for projects such as wind farms and large-scale transportation developments meeting our society's growing energy and transportation needs.

Our environmental contaminant specialists review project plans, licenses, even proposed laws and regulations, to avoid or minimize harmful effects on wildlife and habitats. In cases of

significant releases of hazardous waste, they work in the field to pinpoint sources of pollution and investigate effects, using this data to secure compensation for lost or damaged wildlife and habitat.

When we protect species and habitats, we conserve the natural resources on which we all depend. We ensure that wetlands persist to protect us from storms and filter our water. We conserve for future generations a continued source of sustainable land. Wild things and wild places are part of our shared history. They are part of the natural foundation of the lands we call home. (For additional information, reference: https://www.fws.gov/ecological-services/about/index.html.)

Columbia Pacific Northwest Region Ecological Services Vision

As part of the national Ecological Services Program, we at the Pacific Region are leaders in conserving habitats, preventing extinction, and achieving recovery of our trust resources. Our successes in conservation are derived directly from our talented staff, focused on conservation, in partnership with others. We set the bar for collaborative conservation. Our Core Values include:

- **Conservation.** We work with others to conserve, protect, enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.
    - We prevent extinction.
    - We avoid the need to list by proactively addressing threats and reintroducing species.
    - We creatively employ all available tools and the latest technology.
    - We use the best science to protect trust resources.
    - We help recover species by funding actions on the ground.
    - When species reach the point of downlisting or delisting, we do it.
- **Our People.** We are in the business of growing conservation leaders at every level of the organization that reflect the diversity of the American people.
    - We value diversity of thought and perspective, respectfully challenging assumptions.
    - We hold people accountable, provide timely feedback, seek opportunities to enhance our skills, and focus on promoting continuous personal growth.
    - We develop future leaders by recruiting and retaining talented staff, supporting meaningful training, and encouraging developmental details.
    - We create a work environment that demands work/life balance.
- **Partnerships.** We cannot do this alone.
    - We work with our tribal, state, federal, and other partners to find creative conservation opportunities because conservation is more durable when it balances conservation certainty with project certainty.
    - We work with private landowners to view listed species on their property as an asset rather than a liability. We work in partnership with willing collaborators to conserve species and ecosystems, especially with ranchers, farmers, and forest landowners.
    - We work deliberately across programmatic and geographical lines to increase our effectiveness.
    - We share inspiration, funding, effort, and credit.

Washington Ecological Services Strategic Plan Intent

Washington Ecological Services is part of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Ecological Services program. Our teams work to apply the Ecological Services Program Authorities, as appropriate, to address conservation needs throughout Washington State.

Focus Areas

In 2021, WA-ES implemented a statewide reorganization effort that established six cross-program biological Zone teams, combined with a statewide Coordinators team, an Administrative and Budget Services team and a statewide Leadership team that support work across the program. The reorganization structured WA-ES to better reflect our program focus areas:

- Conservation, the focus of our work;
- Our people, the foundation of success; and,
- Empowered to achieve conservation.

These program focus areas affirm conservation as the highest priority for our work. They also recognize that an empowered and proficient workforce is the foundation for achieving our conservation goals. Our current organization seeks to promote cross-team, statewide approaches to conservation that benefit multiple species and that creatively use multiple tools (i.e., funding, authorities, regulatory tools, team expertise, partnerships, and community relationships) to achieve conservation. It is our intent that these multi-species, multi-tool teams will allow for more innovative and integrated approaches to conservation, while empowering team members and supporting the broader WA-ES team. The individual team chapters more specifically describe each team's focus, conservation challenges and approach under this Plan.

Strategic Plan Vision

To further the program focus areas, we have collaboratively developed a strategic plan that is aimed at benefiting ecosystems and communities across Washington State through identifying and achieving conservation outcomes that strategically address current and future challenges. Our diversified and skilled workforce is empowered to achieve those goals consistent with our agency mission.

The WA-ES Strategic Plan will help to further the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Mission and Columbia Pacific Northwest Region Vision by helping teams identify opportunities to apply the appropriate Ecological Services authorities to most effectively achieve conservation outcomes that align with our priorities and objectives.

Washington Ecological Services Priorities

During development of the Strategic Plan, we identified three core statewide priorities to guide us into the future: *Conservation, People, and Partnerships.* The statewide priorities correspond directly with the Columbia Pacific Northwest Region's Ecological Services Core Values; our objectives for each are discussed below.

- ***Conservation: We protect, restore, sustain, and enhance healthy ecosystem function to support recovery of listed species, prevent future listings, and ensure a robust and resilient biotic community.***

Conservation is the highest purpose of our work. Our cross-program biological Zone teams have identified conservation priorities with a focus on ecosystems and habitat restoration. This allows us to address conservation from a multi-species perspective, using a variety of tools and resources to accomplish our goals. Our priorities highlight the importance of increasing and maintaining landscape connectivity and reducing fragmentation, supporting ecosystems services, building climate resilience, and addressing the impacts of climate change, invasive species, and humans. Our conservation work must also be proactive and adaptable, allowing us to nimbly address future conservation challenges and threats. Our operating principles provide additional guidance for how we will approach this priority and individual team chapters further outline our specific conservation priorities by team.

- ***People: We create, retain, and develop an empowered, proficient workforce and provide opportunities for cross-training and development to support a diversity of workload and policy experience. Our work environment is productive, creative, and innovative.***

A dedicated and empowered workforce with a broad range of expertise throughout all teams is vital. We must ensure that our workforce is resilient and highly trained across a diversity of duties and subject areas to be readily adaptable to accomplish our highest priority work.

Our culture supports learning from experience. We seek to increase our staff's policy experience and capacity by providing opportunities for cross-training, and participation in a diverse array of work details and projects. Concurrently, we actively develop the next generation of conservation professionals to support succession planning. Consistent with this priority and our operating principles, each team actively engages in opportunities for staff recruitment, succession planning, training, and development.

Empowered employees create a work environment that values trust, communication, skill building, professional development, and collaboration. We nourish a culture of empowerment that provides more room for decision-making at all levels, values creativity, innovation, and supports healthy risk-taking and experimentation. Teams are encouraged to work efficiently and act on opportunities to streamline processes so that more staff capacity is dedicated to furthering our priorities. Our Coordinators and Administrative and Budget Services teams identify additional priorities, objectives, and strategies to support this statewide priority.

- ***Partnerships: We cultivate and maintain collaborative relationships with internal and external partners to implement a shared vision for conservation and management of ecosystems.***

Partnerships are vital to moving our work forward. In the face of significant conservation challenges, our partnerships enable us to combine and leverage our limited resources and achieve greater impact. We value our partners' goals and their perspectives concerning conservation.

Our partners also provide a valuable lens through which we can perceive our own efforts and help us consider how best to implement our mission and conservation priorities.

We work with our partners to understand their priorities, communicate our priorities, and identify shared interests, mutual goals and complementary policies, strategies and projects to further conservation and ecosystem management.

Partnerships also help us build public and cultural support for rare and declining species and ecosystems. Our intent is to foster and maintain culturally inclusive and innovative partnerships that maximize our ability to meet our conservation priorities. This includes developing relationships with new and non-traditional partners within the communities we work and providing relevant education and technical assistance to increase partner and public understanding and support for conservation challenges, priorities, and actions. Further, we work with partners to communicate our efforts to the broader public to encourage a conservation-mindset and develop the next generation of conservation professionals. This includes developing strategies to improve public understanding of our mission and our role as a public resource.

Our operating principles provide additional guidance for how we will approach this priority and individual teams incorporate this priority in their chapter's strategies.

Operating Principles

The following Operating Principles set the foundation for how WA-ES will operate under this plan:

1. **Prioritization of conservation benefit:** The Plan provides a filter through which we can assess and focus all our efforts toward achieving the highest conservation benefits. The Plan is a guiding document that will help our teams prioritize their workloads and inform how we approach our work. Whenever possible, we will approach our work in a manner that furthers our shared priorities and utilizes opportunities to move our team priorities and objectives forward.

2. **Decision-making:** The Plan supports informed and transparent decision-making at all levels. We value and want to encourage decision-making by those that are closest to the actions being contemplated. The Plan's articulated priorities, objectives and strategies create more opportunities for decision-making at all levels and provide additional transparency for supervisory-level decisions regarding workload. Additionally, the Plan will inform our decision-making concerning our work with others, help us to better communicate the rationale for our choices, and identify opportunities where work with partners could be better aligned to further our priorities.

3. **Maximizing conservation outcomes through efficient use of resources:** Our objective is to dedicate a larger share of our staff, time, and resources to furthering priority conservation outcomes. This means that we will look to streamline processes to improve workload efficiencies, including the development of programmatic consultations, where possible.

4. **Utilizing a cross-team approach to conservation:** Our commitment is to maximize the conservation benefit for all ecosystems and species, to facilitate habitat and landscape connectivity, and to preserve ecosystem services on a statewide basis. Accordingly, we will coordinate and work collaboratively on our conservation efforts across teams to achieve a greater and more holistic impact. We coordinate with other WA-ES teams on a regular basis to ensure that our efforts are both complementary and comprehensive.

5. **Plan Implementation**: Our intent is to incorporate the Plan proactively into team and individual workplans to facilitate workload delegation, and to support staff development and shared accountability. Using this plan, we strategically consider how to best assign our resources to meaningfully contribute to partnerships that further shared goals.

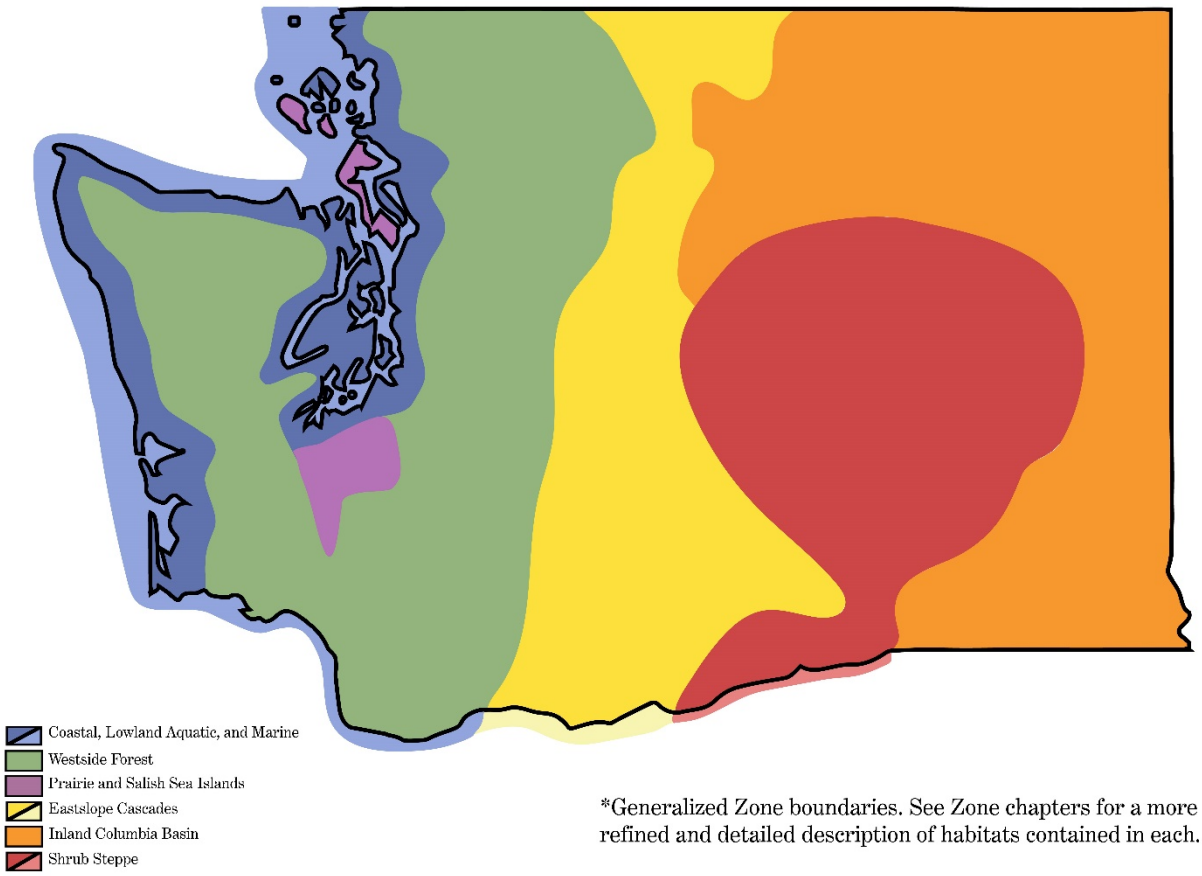
Zone Team Priorities, Objectives, and Strategies

Zone Team Overview

The WA-ES Zone teams have worked together to identify priorities, objectives, and strategies to protect, restore, sustain, and enhance healthy ecosystem function to support recovery of listed species, prevent future listings, and ensure a robust and resilient biotic community. The six Zone teams include:

- Coastal Lowland Aquatic Marine
- Eastslope Cascades
- Inland Columbia Basin
- Prairie and Salish Sea Islands
- Shrub-steppe
- Westside Forests

The following pages provide detail regarding each zone's long-term priority conservation outcomes identified to reflect the Plan vision, actionable objectives to work towards in the near-term to support the conservation outcomes, and five-year strategies that clarify the broad activities required to achieve those objectives.



*Generalized Zone boundaries. See Zone chapters for a more refined and detailed description of habitats contained in each.

Coastal Lowland Aquatic Marine Zone

The Coastal Lowland Aquatic Marine zone incorporates the following ecosystems:

- Nearshore marine, estuarine, and coastal waters
- Large lakes/reservoirs/modified waters
- Mainstem rivers, floodplains, and riparian areas
- Freshwater and coastal/estuarine wetlands
- Coastal dunes, beaches, and islands
- Urban/built environment

The Coastal Lowland Aquatic Marine (CLAM) zone encompasses much of the built environment of western Washington. Ecosystems in this zone have been dramatically altered over the past 150 years as settlers transformed the region's lowland forests, wetlands, shorelines, river channels, and floodplains into the modern infrastructure that supports the approximately 4.2 million people that now live and work in the Puget Sound region. Vast areas of estuarine wetlands near the mouths of rivers that flow from the Cascade and Olympic Mountain ranges were diked and drained to support agricultural land-uses. Rivers were channelized, dammed, and leveed to manage flood flows, disconnecting floodplains from riverine systems, and altering the natural cycle of flooding. Today, highways and roads impact waterbodies they intersect by directing pollutants into receiving waterbodies, inhibiting aquatic connectivity at stream and river crossings, and reducing groundwater infiltration. Ongoing and legacy sources of environmental contaminants further degrade habitat functions, especially in the nearshore areas of Puget Sound that were developed as ports and centers of industrial development supporting the region's major cities of Seattle, Tacoma, Bremerton, Bellingham, Olympia, and Everett. Invasive species have altered physical habitat and ecosystem processes, outcompeted, or removed native species, and reduced native species viability. Currently, and at an increasing pace, climate change impacts the predictability, type, and amount of precipitation; reduces snowfield and glacial extent; and increases stream water temperatures. These regional landscape-scale modifications have resulted in significant habitat loss and fragmentation while altering ecosystem processes and functions, and these changes have impacted native plants and animals.

To address the ecological challenges in the Coastal Lowland Aquatic Marine zone will take a multi-faceted and collaborative approach to correct and reduce damage from past and future actions, natural resource use, and development. We will use outreach and education efforts to raise public awareness about our conservation priorities. We will work alongside our partners, strive to anticipate and respond to threats, and thereby prevent or minimize impacts to natural resources. We will use the full range of tools, programs, and other resources available to WA-ES, so that we can protect and improve the ecological health of Washington's coastal lowland aquatic marine ecosystems.

Priorities: The Coastal Lowland Aquatic Marine Zone team identified the following long-term priority conservation outcomes:

- Improved ecosystem processes and functions that support habitat quality, extent, and connectivity for trust resources.
- Viable fish, wildlife, and plant populations that are resilient in the face of current and future threats.

Objectives and Strategies: Our efforts aimed at achieving these long-term priority conservation outcomes will focus on the following near-term objectives and five-year strategies:

Objective: Preserve habitat and ecosystem processes and functions that support native biodiversity by:

- Identifying and communicating areas of preservation that are essential to the recovery and viability of trust and at-risk species. Preserving habitat identified as a priority for species conservation through acquisition and preservation, or long-term conservation easements in collaboration with partners.
- Pairing regulatory 'streamlining' with voluntary measures/programs (including advance mitigation and mitigation banks) to incentivize protection of ecosystem functions and processes.
- Reducing and preventing contaminants from entering habitats that support priority species.
- Ensuring freshwater is of adequate quantity and quality to support trust resources including Oregon spotted frog and bull trout.
- Identifying areas of climate refugia or opportunities to manage for climate resiliency.
- Working with partners to ensure that public land access and recreational uses and programs are compatible with conservation efforts.

Objective: Restore and enhance habitat, and ecosystem processes and functions to sustain native biodiversity, by:

- Utilizing existing watershed prioritization tools/resources that incorporate information on the level of ecological degradation, potential for ecological improvement, and importance to at-risk fish, wildlife, and plants to focus enhancement and restoration actions.
- Working with partners to implement ecosystem restoration actions, including restoring processes that rebuild and sustain habitats, improve passage for fish and other aquatic species, and increase habitat connectivity.
- Identifying and communicating areas of habitat enhancement and connectivity that are essential to the recovery and viability of trust and at-risk species and collaborating with our partners to increase support for conservation of those areas.
- Correcting and repairing damage from past actions, land-uses, and development through partnerships that direct, incentivize, implement, and fund restoration.
- Reduce impacts of contaminants on aquatic ecosystems and utilize Natural Resource Damage Assessments for trust resources that are affected.
- Monitoring for and reducing adverse effects of, or eradicating, invasive species and disease and preventing or minimizing introductions of invasive and nuisance species.
- Managing habitat or restoring ecological processes that support dynamic and early successional habitat.
- Supporting bull trout and marbled murrelet recovery by improving habitat to increase nearshore marine prey resource productivity.
- Working with partners to reduce non-point source environmental pollution including toxics, noise, and light.

- Partnering with others to increase public awareness and advance science and management of landscape connectivity, ecosystem functions and processes, and trust resources (with a focus on coastal lowland aquatic marine habitats).

Objective: Implement proactive response to future threats, including climate change, by:

- Working with partners to incorporate emerging science to develop, implement, and assess adaptive responses that increase aquatic ecosystems resilience in the face of climate change.
- Collaborating with partners to manage and plan for landscape-scale effects of climate change (e.g., increased air and water temperatures, ocean acidification, flooding, and fire).
- Fostering climate change awareness with partners to coordinate conservation, objectives, resiliency, and adaptation or mitigation.
- Increasing understanding of future demand on water quantity and threats to water quality, including emerging contaminants and increased water temperature.
- Coordinating and communicating research that supports informed WA-ES decision-making and management while sharing that science and decision/management process to partners and public.

Objective: Protect and enhance fish, wildlife, and plant populations, by:

- Negotiating early changes to proposed actions to avoid and minimize mortality and injury through interagency coordination.
- Providing regulatory certainty to private landowners with listed and at-risk species through Candidate Conservation Agreements, Safe Harbor Agreements, and Habitat Conservation Plans.
- Securing, restoring, and managing adequate year-round aquatic habitat for at-risk and listed species (e.g., bull trout, Oregon spotted frog) in associated shoreline, riparian, and floodplain habitats.
- Improving and protecting habitat conditions for at-risk bird species associated with coastal ecosystems including Western snowy plover and streaked horned lark.
- Assessing the need for augmenting populations through captive breeding and other means where essential for the recovery of at-risk species.

Eastslope Cascades

The Eastslope Cascades zone incorporates the following ecosystems:

- Forested
- Aquatic
- Shrub-steppe
- Alpine and sub-alpine

Current species communities in the diverse ecosystems of the Eastslope Cascades zone are comprised of narrow-range endemics and wide-ranging species. From North to South, ecosystems in the valley bottoms receive less than 10 inches of precipitation while those at the crest of the Cascade Mountains receive over 140 inches. Geography provides for unique ecotypes that vary from dry to moist. The ecotypes are diverse, variable, and include shrub steppe, dry ponderosa pine forest, oak woodlands, grasslands, meadows, lowland and subalpine mesic mixed forest and woodlands, alpine, glacial, bedrock/talus, wetland, lake, and riverine habitats. Both vertical and horizontal connectivity is imperative between upland and aquatic ecosystems, and necessary for species and their habitats to persist.

Geology, precipitation, and elevation are important variables necessary to sustain these diverse ecosystems. Habitat loss and conversion, overharvest of species, barriers to movement, invasive species, and climate change are major contributing factors to species decline in this zone. Climate change has exacerbated impacts from past land management and increased the severity of effects from wildfire, insect outbreaks, invasive species, disease, drought, increased glacial melt, reduced snowpack, altered stream temperatures, altered hydrograph, and chemical contamination. Ecological function will be achieved when habitat conditions are functioning and populations are connected to provide for resilient and redundant populations that are represented across the landscape and species ranges, and can withstand human perturbations, invasive species, and climate change.

To help further our conservation outcomes, we aim to increase understanding of at-risk species' needs and changing ecosystems through actionable science and collaborative partnerships. Much of our efforts are centered around conserving and enhancing ecosystem and species resiliency, while proactively managing for impacts from climate change and associated events such as fire and drought. We plan to actively engage in internal, local, and regional planning efforts aimed at creating strategic and holistic approaches to supporting species and ecosystem conservation. Coordination is essential with adjoining Zone teams (Westside Forests, Shrub-steppe) to connect, protect, and restore habitats to achieve sufficient quantities and quality of habitat, prevent extinction of species, recover listed species, and prevent future listings in this zone.

Priorities: The Eastslope Cascades Zone team identified the following long-term priority conservation outcomes:

- Forested watershed, alpine and sub-alpine, aquatic, and shrub-steppe ecosystems are restored and protected and contribute to the resiliency and conservation of the species within those ecosystems.

Objectives and Strategies: Our efforts aimed at achieving these long-term priority conservation outcomes will focus on the following near-term objectives and five-year strategies:

Objective: Promote ecosystem resiliency to reduce detrimental impacts to priority species and their habitats from fires, drought, floods, and climate change, by:

- Determining natural ranges of species and habitat conditions and increasing understanding of variability and resiliency to effects from fire, drought, floods, and climate change, and mapping key refugia that will conserve and/or provide for future habitat.
- Planning and coordination with partners to minimize loss of habitat by utilizing tools such as programmatic strategies/consultations for high priority forest actions, modeling, and mapping of high priority resiliency areas, developing strategy to facilitate strategic thinning and fire breaks in key connectivity areas, and developing habitat conservation plans with landowners to facilitate connectivity actions.
- Working with partners to reduce, modify, or change practices that are detrimental to habitats and/or to encourage more beneficial practices (e.g., efficient irrigation practices).
- Working with partners and communities to increase the ability of forest adjacent communities to process small diameter logs and other non-traditional eco-timber products that would benefit the local economies, increase the pace and scale of forest restoration and fire resiliency projects, and benefit habitats and listed species.
- Tracking and monitoring insects and disease.
- Projecting vegetation changes into the future and facilitating science that informs our understanding of how to conserve the species with a changing climate.

Objective: Conserve, maintain, and improve status and trends of priority species in forested, aquatic, alpine and sub-alpine ecosystems (i.e., numbers, distribution, and reproduction of populations), by:

- Working with partners to conserve northern spotted owl habitat, reduce impacts from barred owls, develop consistent approaches for working within late-successional habitat, and on the ground survey, monitoring and restoration.
- Furthering efforts aimed at filling data gaps, restoring and conserving populations of carnivore species including Canada lynx, gray wolf, grizzly bear, fisher, wolverine, and Cascade red fox, and their habitats.
- Conserving and restoring habitat for current populations of narrow range endemic plants, such as Wenatchee Mountains checker-mallow, showy stickseed, and Ute ladies'-tresses.
- Working with partners to develop upstream and downstream passage criteria at mainstem Columbia River and storage dams and feasibility studies for removal of passage blockages that have major impacts on native fish (bull trout, lamprey, etc.).
- Working with partners to identify bull trout refugia that will persist through predicted climate change and developing plans to manage threats.
- Working with partners to plan and implement bull trout reintroduction.
- Promoting a shared approach to bull trout and other species recovery and implementation of the aquatic partners program.

- Defining and protecting priority habitat for Mount Rainier white-tailed ptarmigan and whitebark pine to ensure resiliency to climate change.
- Continuing work on Species Status Assessments, Five-Year reviews, and conservation strategies.
- Participating in development of metrics, maps, and efforts to fill information gaps for forest species populations.
- Implementing and partnering on outreach and education efforts to minimize impacts on at-risk species.

Objective: Conserve candidate species and Northwest Forest Plan Survey and Manage species, by:

- Continuing to participate in the Northwest Forest Plan Modernization and Revision Process and the Survey and Manage Program.
- Continuing to emphasize maintenance and improvement of Northwest Forest Plan programs for long-term conservation purposes.
- Implementing more candidate conservation agreements.

Objective: Prioritize connectivity in ecosystems for greatest conservation benefit, by:

- Gathering or conducting connectivity and GAP analyses and establishing key risk areas to focus restoration and conservation activities.
- Implementing conservation activities in key connectivity areas.
- Utilizing hiring tools like Directorate Fellowships to bring in assistance with mapping/data collection.
- Working with partners to develop fish passage priorities and habitat restoration work to gain passage at culverts/bridges, travel management plans, road reduction and actions to increase connectivity, etc.
- Developing cross zone, boundary, and border relationships for ecosystem planning and recovery.

Objective: Minimize development impacts to listed species in all ecosystems within our zone, by:

- Coordinating community programmatic and/or holistic strategies for relicensing and permitting green energy and transmission projects.
- Coordinating across zones to develop a programmatic approach and/or strategies to address impacts from people and access routes to key refugia.
- Implementing restorative actions to improve refugia and improve connectivity for listed species.

Objective: Conserve and recover bull trout and its habitat, including its prey-base and its habitat, by:

- Implementing various authorities under the Endangered Species Act to recover bull trout.

- Continue leading and participating in regional partnerships/efforts aimed at planning for and implementing recovery, conserving bull trout across its range, developing collaborative and strategic projects, funding, and protocols, as well as reporting and tracking take.
- Participating in design/implementation of the distribution mapping and bull trout range mapping.

Objective: Reduce threat of non-native and invasive species, by:

- Monitoring range and abundance to adaptively manage and prioritize invasive species.
- Establishing priority habitats for protection and management.
- Working with partners to minimize the spread of and manage invasives. These invasives include cheat grass, barred owl, northern pike, and brook trout.
- Controlling and managing invasive species around listed species and habitats, especially where it can reduce fire risk (e.g., cheat grass).

Objective: Reduce loss of shrub-steppe habitat from high intensity and large-scale fire, by:

- Working with internal and external partners to develop strategic plans and conservation efforts that promote recovery, conservation, and connectivity of shrub-steppe habitat and species, such as sage grouse and Umtanum desert buckwheat.
- Utilizing management plans to better prioritize shrub-steppe management, focusing efforts on reducing habitat conversion and loss to agriculture land.
- Considering land acquisition opportunities.

Inland Columbia Basin

The Inland Columbia Basin zone incorporates the following ecosystems:

- North-Pend Oreille and Upper Columbia River
- Palouse Prairie
- Dry forest lands
- Snake River and tributaries

The Inland Columbia Basin zone is geographically very diverse, comprised of the Okanogan Highlands, Selkirk Mountains, Channeled Scablands, Palouse Prairie, and Blue Mountains, and includes major valleys of the Columbia, Pend Oreille, Spokane, and Snake Rivers and their tributaries. Past development, agriculture, and rapid urban growth have resulted in the reduction of native habitats and habitat fragmentation, particularly associated with construction of hydroelectric dams on major rivers. Extreme drought and high severity fire present further challenges, particularly in the forested habitats, as temperatures continue to increase.

To further our efforts aimed at addressing the limiting factors within these ecosystems, we will work with a broad range of partners and stakeholders to strategically monitor, restore, increase access to and manage habitats and their functions. Our focus includes: minimizing and mitigating the effects of new development; managing impacts from fires to protect quality habitat and promote diversity (including high severity fires); and implementing recovery actions vital to the conservation of habitats on which listed and rare species depend. Our efforts are aimed at actions that benefit multiple species and life stages across the landscape and are well planned and coordinated to support long-term recovery and sustainable outcomes. To best support this work, we will invest in our internal and external capacity through training, education, outreach, and new and established partnerships.

Priorities: The Inland Columbia Basin Zone team identified the following long-term priority conservation outcomes:

- Ecosystem function is protected, restored, sustained, and enhanced.
- Threats to populations are minimized, and stable and increasing populations are promoted.
- Our conservation mission remains relevant and has continuity.

Objectives and Strategies: Our efforts aimed at achieving these long-term priority conservation outcomes will focus on the following near-term objectives and five-year strategies:

Objective: Maintain and improve connectivity for native aquatic species, by:

- Developing fish passage facilities at Albeni Falls, Box Canyon, and other structures.
- Developing statewide bull trout recovery strategy to inform and prioritize funding for where it will be most effective.
- Collaboratively developing levee restoration and mitigation strategies in southeastern Washington aimed at improving levees to support future climate conditions, mitigating impacts of levees to species and their habitat, and developing a Programmatic Biological Opinion for levee response.

Objective: Conduct aquatic habitat and species restoration, by:

- Developing, implementing, and partnering on Upper Columbia River aquatic restoration actions, including salmon reintroduction, bull trout research, and redband trout, mussel, and white sturgeon recovery.
- Working with partners to implement habitat restoration projects on private lands.
- Understanding and focusing recovery actions on bull trout spawning areas and habitats critical to other life stages, while expanding data collection and partnerships for monitoring and recovery actions.
- Supporting partners in redband trout habitat restoration through collaborative efforts, education, and Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration settlements.
- Developing a post-Natural Resource Damage Assessment settlement restoration plan to include tributary and off-channel habitat restoration and to benefit mussels and salmonids.
- Collaboratively developing levee restoration and mitigation strategy in southeastern Washington aimed at improving levees to support future climate conditions, mitigating impacts of levees on habitat, and developing Programmatic Biological Opinion for levee response.

Objective: Support recovery and healthy populations of priority species, such as Spalding's catchfly, Selkirk grizzly bear, monarch, and bumblebee, by:

- Supporting recovery actions with funding and/or projects designed to meet recovery criteria.
- Improving public awareness and education around reintroduction, recovery, and restoration; working with partners via cost-sharing opportunities, and further information and education on public lands.
- Maintaining or enhancing surveying, monitoring, and post-delisting monitoring of species.
- Increasing pollinator recovery and habitat by establishing partnerships, outreach, and education with community to understand relationships between habitat and species.
- Supporting recovery actions for priority at-risk species to prevent future listing.
- Building climate change and invasive species resiliency into restoration and recovery actions.

Objective: Minimize the extent and frequency of high severity fire across ecosystems to maintain connectivity and habitat, by:

- Working with diverse stakeholders to develop large landscape scale plans for multiple species (i.e., lynx, grizzly bear, whitebark pine, and caribou).
- Balancing the Wildlife Urban Interface to manage fuels and protect habitat and species diversity; with a focus on protecting unique areas.

Objective: Restore and reduce the impact of contaminated habitat on species, by:

- Rebuilding staff capacity and resources to ensure there are sufficient staff trained to respond to hazardous material spills and conduct Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration.

Objective: Increase understanding of recovery needs of species with significant information gaps, by:

- Mapping potential habitat and survey distribution to help focus recovery efforts to suitable habitat (i.e., yellow-billed cuckoo, Western ridge mussel, bull trout in Lake Roosevelt).
- Working with partner agencies to develop reforestation and preservation plans following mortality from fire, beetles, and diseases.

Objective: Retain and restore wetlands and prairie remnants and reduce fragmentation through development of conservation partnerships in Palouse, by:

- Reconnecting with partners to increase wetland and prairie conservation, retain remnants and reduce fragmentation.

Prairie and Salish Sea Islands

The Prairie and Salish Sea Islands zone incorporates the following ecosystems:

- Willamette Valley-Puget Trough-Georgia Basin Ecoregion uplands, prairies, and savannas (prairies)
- North Pacific herbaceous balds and bluffs (balds)
- North Pacific maritime coastal sand dunes and strands (dunes)
- North Pacific oak woodland (woodlands)

Current species communities in these ecosystems are fragmented, incomplete, disconnected, and small. The areas where these ecosystems persist are too small to recover species and be resilient to perturbations in climate without restoration, management, and increased connectivity. The geographic arrangement of these rare ecosystems and decades of incremental fragmentation by conversion to incompatible land uses has constrained the ability of these patches to connect and expand suitable habitat, limiting the ability of federally listed species to naturally expand their populations.

Our focus will be to continue to develop and disseminate management practices that can be successful at regional scales. Reintroductions, translocations, and/or rearing and breeding programs will likely be required to recover or sustain many species dependent on our ecosystems. We will coordinate with partners to develop implementation plans and provide regulatory certainty to our cooperators and the community. Collaboration with state agencies that have overlapping responsibilities for species recovery is a special area of focus.

Priorities: The Prairie and Salish Sea Islands (PSSI) Zone team identified the following long-term priority conservation outcomes:

- Prairies, dunes, balds, and oak woodlands are conserved in sufficient quantities to prevent extinction of listed species, recover already-listed species, and prevent future listings in these ecosystems.
- Ecological function and the biotic community are protected against ongoing regional growth and development and are robust and resilient enough to withstand perturbations in climate.
- Habitats and human activities are consistently managed in a manner that supports the continued existence of prairies, balds, dune, and woodland ecosystems.

Objectives and Strategies: Our efforts aimed at achieving these long-term priority conservation outcomes will focus on the following near-term objectives and five-year strategies:

Objective: Develop, restore, and maintain a diverse portfolio of priority ecosystem conservation areas capable of providing for the long-term viability of all the biotic communities present in the zone, by:

- Working with partners to permanently conserve lands that are part of, or encompass, priority ecosystem conservation areas.
- Building a culture within communities that engages private landowners to maintain and support working lands through proactive and voluntary conservation.

- Completing and approving Habitat Conservation Plans for local/regional governments in Thurston County and facilitating new conservation planning efforts in the PSSI zone to address the effects of development activities and programs on listed and unlisted species.
- Restoring and maintaining stable grassland-dependent bird populations.
- Analyzing and demonstrating that Mazama pocket gophers and other prairie dependent listed species are on pace to meet Recovery Plan objectives by combination of approved Habitat Conservation and other plans, conservation/mitigation sites, and reserve networks with long-term management agreements.
- Establishing a Southwest Washington working group to prioritize and coordinate prairie conservation in Lewis, Cowlitz, and Clark Counties and in the Chehalis Basin west of Thurston County.

Objective: Support foundational programmatic habitat and ecosystem restoration and management activities, including plant propagule production, prescribed fire, invasive species control, information sharing, species translocations, and ecosystem level planning and biosecurity, by:

- Supporting plant material production necessary for restoration of priority ecosystem conservation areas.
- Facilitating a translocation and/or reintroduction of island marble butterfly to Lopez Island.
- Completing a Taylor's checkerspot butterfly translocation plan in cooperation with partners and developing an additional rearing facility to translocate Graysmarsh Taylor's checkerspot butterfly to Protection Island and/or another suitable long-term refugia.
- Reintroducing Nelson's checkermallow and Kincaid's lupine to protected sites with long-term conservation commitments.
- Facilitating the translocation of streaked horned lark to new protected sites in the South Puget Lowlands geographic location.
- Creating/supporting a multi-stakeholder program that can sustainably implement prescribed fire at ecologically and regionally significant scales.

Objective: Build climate change resiliency and adaptation into restoration, protection, and invasive species actions and objectives, by:

- Conserving habitats containing a variety of edaphic, moisture, slope, and aspect conditions that provide additional resiliency against changing climate.
- Considering conservation introductions to facilitate species movement to allow new plant and animal communities to be more resilient to a changing climate.
- Considering climate change in conservation planning.
- Prioritizing restoration and conservation on lands that help connect habitats and/or reduce fragmentation.

Objective: Support the research necessary to understand factors limiting conservation and recovery success for biotic communities and species throughout the zone, including identification of future species at risk, by:

- Completing demographic studies in support of proactive conservation of at-risk species, especially sand verbena moth and Oregon vesper sparrow.
- Supporting research projects focused on how to best control non-native herbaceous and woody vegetation to restore prairies, dunes, balds, and woodlands, including mechanical and chemical treatment, prescribed burns, and management strategies that mimic historic disturbance regimes.
- Developing and/or supporting range-wide monitoring programs for species of concern in the zone, including grassland/prairie-dependent birds, plants, and invertebrates.

Shrub-Steppe

The Shrub-steppe zone incorporates the following ecosystems:

- Shrub-steppe
- Columbia River/aquatic

Native shrub-steppe habitats have been dramatically reduced in size and are highly fragmented. Most of the land ownership is private, producing an abundance of crops and livestock, while public lands with remnant shrub-steppe habitat are scattered. Invasion by cheatgrass has altered vegetative communities significantly, adversely impacting the timing, extent, and severity of fires. Further, developmental pressures for agriculture and energy production are high. Conservation efforts in this landscape are therefore very challenging and rely heavily on partnerships with private landowners and public land management agencies. Maintaining and restoring shrub-steppe habitats is vital to the persistence of many species, including federally and state listed species that depend on these habitats.

Maintaining working lands, private and public partnerships, and minimizing the effects of future developments are key to the conservation of the shrub-steppe landscape. In the Shrub-Steppe zone, our conservation and preservation efforts center around using the tools available to WA-ES to support effective and active partnerships. We will focus on establishing, restoring, and protecting habitat networks that facilitate healthy ecosystems for plant, animal, and human communities. Our approach will address both current and future conditions, with an eye towards minimizing threats and increasing resiliency. Coordination is essential with adjoining Zone teams (Eastslope Cascades and Inland Columbia Basin) to connect, protect, and restore habitats to achieve sufficient quantities and quality of habitat, prevent extinction of species, recover listed species, and prevent future listings in this zone.

Priorities: The Shrub-steppe Zone team identified the following long-term priority conservation outcomes:

- Federally listed species found within the shrub-steppe are on a trajectory toward recovery.
- Shrub-steppe ecosystem health and function is promoted through proactive restoration and protection.
- A working landscape is supported and maintained to facilitate the ability of landowners to manage their land while minimizing impacts to trust resources.

Objectives and Strategies: Our efforts aimed at achieving these long-term priority conservation outcomes will focus on the following near-term objectives and five-year strategies:

Objective: Increase habitat connectivity and reduce habitat loss or fragmentation to facilitate current and future movement of species across the landscape, by:

- Improving in-stream habitat and structural conditions (i.e., fishways).
- Establishing and maintaining a network of native habitat that is directly connected, or within the dispersal capabilities, of species of concern.

- Developing strategies and recommendations to minimize the footprint and impact of proposed projects in shrub-steppe habitats.

Objective: Minimize threats and impacts to increase resiliency for species and ecosystems within the shrub-steppe zone and across species' ranges, by:

- Establishing and/or maintaining self-sustaining populations of federally listed species in multiple locations by implementing Recovery Plan Actions for endemic species.
- Establishing and protecting plant communities that are resistant and resilient to disturbances such as fire and climate change.
- Implementing near-term actions to restore wildlife and habitat impacted by wildfire.
- Developing a long-term strategy to address the needs of shrub-steppe wildlife and communities influenced by wildfire.
- Prioritizing restoration and protection efforts in areas with at-risk species to reduce the potential for new species listings.
- Increasing collaborative efforts aimed at reducing the frequency and impact of wildfire, strategic restoration of shrub-steppe habitat adjacent to listed species populations and addressing the needs of shrub-steppe wildlife and communities influenced by wildfire.

Objective: Increase the scope and scale of current shrub-steppe restoration and preservation efforts, by:

- Identifying key efforts and programs in restoring and preserving shrub-steppe habitat and partnering with others to implement or obtain funding for those with the most significant conservation benefits.
- Increasing participation and engagement with agencies, organizations and initiatives that focus on shrub-steppe conservation.
- Utilizing appropriate Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration settlement funds for restoration and preservation of shrub-steppe habitat.
- Generating additional community trust through the consistent delivery of high-quality technical assistance and community engagement.
- Building collaborative working relationships with programs that influence the management of private and tribal lands, to increase understanding of partner programs that could be beneficial to listed species, reduce perceptions of Endangered Species Act regulatory burden, and encourage sustainable water use practices and collaborative recovery efforts.

Objective: Assess potential impacts of contaminants on trust resources and increase capacity to prepare and respond to releases, by:

- Determining which listed species are threatened by contaminants and implementing research and recovery activities to reduce impacts, including sage-grouse.
- Increasing staff capacity for spill response and developing protocols for response.
- Utilizing Natural Resource Damage Assessments for trust resources that are substantially affected.

Westside Forests

The Westside Forests zone incorporates the following ecosystems:

- Westside Cascade and Olympic Peninsula montane forests
- Coastal temperate rainforests of the Olympic Peninsula and southwest Washington
- Freshwater rivers, streams, lakes, and wetlands
- Alpine (non-forested) and subalpine areas
- Uncommon habitats and habitat features (e.g., meadows, balds, caves)

The Westside Forests zone encompasses the forested and alpine areas of the west slope of the Washington Cascades, the Olympic Peninsula, and southwestern Washington. The zone also includes a complex array of freshwater lakes, rivers, wetlands and associated riparian habitats. Historically, the dominant ecosystem in this zone was comprised of temperate and montane old-growth forests. Old-growth forests, and old-growth dependent species have become highly fragmented over the past century, and most of the landscape is now dominated by young forests managed for commercial timber production. Limiting factors in this landscape include old-forest habitat loss and fragmentation, reduced habitat connectivity for old-growth dependent species, impaired riparian and aquatic habitat function from past timber harvest practices and, reduced aquatic habitat connectivity due to a high density of roads, dams, and urbanization. Forested, aquatic, and alpine habitats in this zone are undergoing rapid ecological change in response to climate change, resulting in increased stress associated with drought, reduced snowpack, and an increasing risk of catastrophic wildfire.

In the Westside Forest zone, our work is focused on the at-risk species and habitats that the Westside Forests ecosystems support. Much of our efforts will focus on identifying restoration, conservation and management actions aimed at enhancing ecosystem function and habitat for key species. Collaborative partnerships and continued learning and adaptive management will be important to the success of our efforts. Coordination with adjoining Zone teams and external partners is essential to achieve our objectives to protect, and restore Westside Forest zone ecosystems, prevent extinction, recover listed species, and prevent future listings in this zone.

Priorities: The Westside Forests Zone team identified the following long-term priority conservation outcomes:

- Ecosystem-specific habitat for priority species is increased, restored, and conserved.
- Forest health is enhanced to support resilient ecosystems that support at-risk species threatened by climate change, fire, and invasive species.
- The status of at-risk species within the zone's ecosystems is improved and on a trajectory towards recovery.

Objectives and Strategies: Our efforts aimed at achieving these long-term priority conservation outcomes will focus on the following near-term objectives and five-year strategies:

Objective: Conserve existing old-growth habitat and encourage the use of forest management to restore late-successional forests on federal and non-federal lands to support conservation of old-growth dependent species by:

- Using ESA Section 7 consultation and/or Habitat Conservation Planning (HCP) to incorporate recovery plan actions and facilitate recovery of old-growth dependent species.
- Working with partners through the Northwest Forest Plan Level 1 process to conserve northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet habitat and support restoration thinning and other efforts to improve forest health and fire resilience.
- Increasing the amount of forest habitat in conservation status through land acquisitions with funding from Section 6 grants, HCP mitigation deferrals, Natural Resource Damage Assessments, or other sources.
- Reducing loss of old-growth (and other) suitable spotted owl and marbled murrelet habitat from fire, windthrow and timber harvest.
- Working with partners to implement acoustic recording unit surveys for forest management projects that affect northern spotted owls.
- Supporting development and implementation of barred owl management in Washington.
- Identifying additional partners capable and willing to support our ongoing conservation efforts.
- Identifying areas with the most potential for successful conservation actions.
- Implementing on-the ground conservation actions with partners, particularly in landscapes dominated by non-federal forest landowners.

Objective: Maintain and improve riparian and aquatic ecosystems to enhance habitat and migratory connectivity for aquatic species by:

- Working with partners to identify opportunities for aquatic species conservation and improvement.
- Using ESA Section 7 consultation and/or Habitat Conservation Planning to incorporate recovery plan actions and facilitate recovery of aquatic and riparian dependent species.
- Using hydro-relicensing and post-licensing efforts to support recovery and conservation of bull trout, Pacific lamprey, and other aquatic species.
- Identifying opportunities to address connectivity issues (e.g., fish passage barrier removal), and working with partners to implement aquatic habitat restoration and improvement projects.
- Identifying the status and conservation needs of freshwater mussels and stream-associated amphibians such as Olympic, Columbia, and Cascade torrent salamanders, Van Dyke's salamander, Dunn's salamander, and tailed frog.
- Working with ongoing efforts to conserve aquatic species in the face of climate change.

Objective: Enhance our understanding of alpine ecosystems and at-risk species such as Mt. Rainier white-tailed ptarmigan and other alpine/subalpine dependent species, by:

- Developing a better understanding the range and abundance of at-risk alpine species.
- Identifying alpine areas that could be resilient to climate change and/or serve as alpine refugia.
- Assessing the future impacts of climate change to alpine habitats and identify methods to ameliorate climate change impacts for these species.

- Assessing the current overlap of recreation facilities within alpine habitats and evaluate the effects of alpine recreation to at-risk species.
- Developing a better understanding the genetic variability within the range of the Mt. Rainier white-tailed ptarmigan.

Objective: Increase the amount and distribution of complex early-seral habitats, montane meadows, and natural balds to improve the status of Taylor's checkerspot butterfly, western bumble bee, and other early-seral dependent species, by:

- Working with partners to identify areas with opportunities to expand and improve native pollinator habitat.
- Working with forest managers (federal and non-federal) to facilitate creation and management of complex early-seral habitats.
- Identifying funding mechanisms to support on-the-ground conservation actions.

Objective: Conserve and enhance whitebark pine stands in fire-influenced ecosystems, and increase understanding of the distribution and abundance of this species, by:

- Working with partners to develop a better understanding of the range, abundance, health, and genetic variability of whitebark pine within the range of the species, particularly in relation to the isolated Olympic Peninsula.
- Identifying forest ecosystem areas that will be resilient to climate change and areas where active management of forest ecosystems will be necessary to restore and regenerate whitebark pine stands.
- Working with partners to manage fire to promote regeneration and persistence of whitebark pine.

Objective: Improve stand conditions and complexity of forest ecosystems within non-federal forests to provide for at-risk species and habitats, by:

- Supporting partners in efforts to encourage diversification of forest conditions and management of important habitat features, such as unique vegetative communities or complex early-seral habitats.
- Working with incentive programs, conservation easements, land acquisition grants, ESA Section 10 agreements, and other tools, to increase and maintain diversity within the working forest landscape.
- Supporting efforts to educate private landowners regarding conservation and to gain better understanding of their needs.

Objective: Leverage our conservation efforts and promote efficiencies, by:

- Developing and implementing an outreach plan that will help internal and external partners understand where, when, and how they can assist in preventing listing, preventing extinction, and promoting recovery of species in our zone.
- Maintaining and sharing up-to-date environmental baselines for our species.
- Providing guidance and analyses on newly listed species (e.g., white-tailed ptarmigan).

- Improving regulatory efficiency by increasing programmatic consultation coverage to reduce the need for individual Section 7 consultations.
- Developing and sharing consistent guidance and templates for analysis of species impacts.

Program Coordination and Administrative Support

Coordinators Team

The Coordinators team includes nine distinct technical and policy positions that provide leadership and guidance to all WA-ES teams on a number of USFWS programs. The nine Coordinator positions include the following program areas:

- Section 4 Classification
- Section 4 Recovery (Section 4 Recovery Planning and Implementation, Section 6 Cooperation with the States, Section 10(a)1(A) recovery permitting)
- Section 7 Policy
- Section 10 Policy (Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs), Safe Harbor Agreements (SHAs), Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances (CCAAs))/National Environmental Policy Act
- Federal Activities (Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (FWCA), the Sikes Act, Wind Energy, Eagle Technical Assistance)
- Partners for Fish and Wildlife (PFW)
- Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA)/ Environmental Contaminants (Spill Response)
- Geographic Information System/Data Management
- External Affairs

The Coordinators bring together expertise and skills that support all WA-ES teams and help ensure a consistent, integrated, and strategic approach to state-wide program implementation. Serving as the centralized program point of contact for the USFWS' Regional and Headquarter offices, while also providing program-specific expertise and policy-level guidance to all WA-ES teams and external partners. The Coordinators team plays a key role in diversifying and empowering our workforce by providing mentorship and training to employees in their program areas. We serve as program managers providing support for complex projects, Regional Office and Headquarter assignments and WA-ES leadership requests. Additionally, the Coordinators work with WA-ES teams to ensure successful execution of the USFWS' program-specific duties including end-of-year reporting, financial assistance processes, and program policy delivery. We play a key coordination role in setting and tracking dates, timelines, deadlines for program-specific projects that span multiple WA-ES teams.

The challenges described in the Zone team chapters are relevant to the Coordinators team at a state-wide scale. The Coordinators' focus is to effectively connect people, partners, and geographically separated efforts to further conservation.

We seek to instill a conservation approach that is holistic in its consideration of conservation needs and is adaptable to future challenges. Our strategic efforts include providing training, mentoring, guidance, and other cross-team coordination to enhance expertise, collaboration, and support a culture of empowerment within our teams. Across our program areas, we will use our tools proactively to focus on our teams' specific conservation priorities. We will work to strengthen our existing partner relationships and cultivate relationships with non-traditional

partners to ensure that our efforts are inclusive of all communities' needs. Funding resources are critical; our focus will be to expand the funding sources available to support both internal and collaborative conservation efforts with our partners.

Priorities: The Coordinators team identified the following long-term priority outcomes:

- The WA-ES organizational culture empowers people through self-direction, creative thinking, and inclusivity.
- The WA-ES conservation approach is holistic and adaptable and encompasses a statewide perspective that considers the conservation needs of all species.
- We maximize opportunities for proactive conservation.
- Our actions foster external partnerships that are robust, inclusive and focus on our conservation priorities.

Objectives and Strategies: Our efforts aimed at achieving these long-term priority outcomes will focus on the following near-term objectives and five-year strategies:

***Objective**: Create an empowering culture within our programs that supports learning curves, learning from failure, and healthy experimentation and risk-taking, by:*
** Applicable to all Programs*

- Providing accessible and diverse forms of training and tools that support and encourage self-direction.
- Developing a list of actions (outside of assignments) for employees to self-select into to encourage delegation and empowerment among peers.
- Establishing informal mentoring groups to build connection and confidence on an interpersonal level, support healthy risk-taking, and autonomy in action.
- Implementing debriefs and after-action-lessons-learned sessions to support further learning and mentoring.
- Using and fostering inclusive, welcoming, and open-minded communication styles.
- Providing opportunities for more inclusive participation in projects.
- Supporting the recruitment and hiring of diversely qualified staff that will promote an empowering culture.

Objective: Coordinate across programs and zones, by:
** Applicable to all Programs*

- Participating in Zone team meetings on a regular basis to highlight conservation opportunities within and across teams, provide opportunities for feedback, and identify needs, capacity, and tools to support successful conservation efforts.
- Creating a feedback process for Zone teams and Coordinators to provide input on conservation opportunities, specific projects, and policy issues.

Objective: Develop and strengthen partnerships with non-traditional partners and communities, by:
**Applicable to all programs, with emphasis on PFW, External Affairs, Section 10, Federal Activities, and NRDA*

- Increasing engagement with non-traditional partners and communities to enhance environmental justice and outreach efforts.
- Supporting the recruitment of interns, temporary assignments pursuant to the Intergovernmental Personnel Act Mobility Program (IPAs), liaisons, and staff members from diverse communities.
- Leading or participating in recovery teams, working groups, and other technical teams to assist with priority conservation needs within communities.
- Understanding and finding solutions to better meet the needs of the community by building and maintaining relationships through trust, accountability, and communication.
- Identifying and catering to the strengths of each partner.
- Building a culture within communities that promotes landowner engagement, perspectives, and trust.

Objective: Develop and strengthen partnerships and funding for conservation projects in priority conservation areas, by:
** Applicable to PFW, Section 4, Section 10, NRDA, and Federal Activities*

- Supporting partnerships through timely funding opportunities and in-kind assistance.
- Improving WA-ES program relevancy and branding with our partners and in communities through the sharing of inspiration, funding, and credit.
- Identifying and leveraging new and existing internal and external funding sources to implement priority conservation projects.
- Leveraging and prioritizing partnerships to expand novel funding sources (reimbursable agreements, cooperative agreements, others) to support staffing needs.
- Working with partners to collaboratively apply for external funds to assist with priority conservation needs.

Objective: Work with others to develop more incentives for landowners, by:
**Applicable to PFW, Section 10, Section 7, and GIS*

- Leveraging our technical assistance and policy expertise to increase external funding opportunities and incentivize our work with landowners and partners.
- Engaging with partners to maximize opportunities to proactively engage through the Endangered Species Act by developing Section 7(a)(1) programs and projects with select partners to help them meet their ESA obligations.
- Developing Section 10(a) priority multi-zone, statewide, conservation plans (i.e., Safe Harbor Agreements, Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances, Habitat Conservation Plans).

Objective: Increase awareness on long-term and emerging conservation issues and scientific knowledge, by:
**Applicable to all Programs with emphasis on External Affairs and Section 4*

- Establishing educational programs, outreach events, and opportunities for citizen science.
- Growing educational and outreach opportunities in our communities.
- Implementing proactive listings or Species Status Assessments outside of the petition process.

Objective: Increase connectivity and reduce fragmentation of habitat, by:
**Applicable to all Programs*

- Prioritizing restoration and conservation in terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems that help connect habitats and/or reduce fragmentation.
- Maintaining space and approval for opportunistic conservation.
- Empowering private landowners to undertake voluntary restoration efforts to achieve ecological uplift for priority at-risk species within ecosystems on private property.

Administrative and Budget Services Team

The Administrative and Budget Services team supports the WA-ES teams with a variety of services on a centralized administration basis. Key service areas include:

- Budget Resources
- Business Operations
- Financial Services
- Record Management
- Administrative Services
- Human Resources

Our focus is to increase workload efficiencies across teams and ensure that our teams receive proficient, timely. and consistent service. In doing so, we must manage the effects of frequent and continuous change. This includes Presidential/Administration changes that affect appropriated budgets and budget sequestration. The team must also manage persistent system requirement updates stemming from the reorganization of Regional and Headquarters budget and administrative functions into the Joint Administrative Operations (JAO). The shift to virtual workspaces underscores the continuous need for electronic maintenance and trouble-shooting and ongoing proactive Information Technology (IT) education. This has been compounded by disconnection from JAO and IT communication and support. The ability to provide service from a remote workspace has also been impacted by a lack of a reliable Virtual Private Network (VPN) connection and office phone connectivity. Finally, the team has been impacted by increased turnover and an inability to fill vacancies quickly and efficiently, resulting in long periods of being understaffed.

Our approach seeks to address these challenges by creating clear and streamlined internal procedures and tools that incorporate, as much as possible, these cycles of change. This includes establishing technical platforms and protocols to ensure that staff can easily access and share information with each other in a uniform way. Finally, cross-training of staff and establishing administrative backup functions will ensure that expertise regarding procedures extends across the team and will also support employee development and succession planning.

Priorities: The Administrative and Budget Resources team identified the following long-term priority outcomes:

- All WA-ES teams and partners receive organized, efficient, and thoughtful customer service.
- Standard Operating Procedures and customer guides are streamlined, clear, and updated regularly.
- Our Administrative and Budget Resources team is cross-trained on procedures and have the skills and expertise necessary to ensure high-level and consistent service.
- All WA-ES teams have access to user-friendly shared workspaces that facilitate collaboration, enhance communication, and improve information sharing.
- All WA-ES physical and virtual workspaces are safe and secure.
- Our conservation mission is enhanced through efficient fiscal management and proactive partnerships.

Objectives and Strategies: Our efforts aimed at achieving these long-term priority outcomes will focus on the following near-term objectives and five-year strategies:

Objective: Establish Customer Service Requests Center to centralize administrative support and guidance, track customer requests, and collect officewide feedback, by:

- Building and maintaining tracking tools to receive electronic request forms and monitor administrative updates and completion reports.
- Providing statewide administrative updates and direct access to all administrative assists for questions, issues, and feedback reports.

Objective: Optimize Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and Guides for customers to support proficient and efficient administrative coordination, by:

- Identifying the processes which are a priority for streamlining.
- Establishing a timeline for SOP and Guide development.
- Implementing a systematic process for updating SOPs and guides on a regular and timely basis.
- Establishing a plan for notifying staff of policy changes that occur before updates can be incorporated into SOPs and Guides.

Objective: Implement information reporting tools and processes to streamline workflow and provide transparent, timely, and accurate responses to customer requests, by:

- Establishing policies and processes to support accurate and accountable reporting of inventory.
- Developing processes to track and report fuel consumption and manage vehicle maintenance.
- Developing processes for grants and interagency agreements that support effective reporting of information at earlier stages in the process.
- Establishing annual reporting of species contributions in grants and agreements.

Objective: Provide periodic training for staff on existing, new, and updated policies and processes related to budget resources and business operations, by:

- Developing training that supports interactive and in-person learning.
- Providing cross-training on Freedom of Information Act and litigation processes.

Objective: Establish administrative structure to support developmental positions across statewide administrative branch, by:

- Developing responsibility structure ranging from GS 5 to GS 12 including detail and acting opportunities in team lead and supervisory roles.
- Supporting collaborative team projects and mentorship programs.

Objective: Promote workload diversity, by:

- Establishing administrative backups for all functions.
- Providing training for consistent support across all teams.
- Utilizing transparent and centralized administrative inboxes to easily assign, monitor, and transition work as needed.

Objective: Establish processes for information-sharing that ensure cross-team and cross-division access to information on a timely and efficient basis, by:

- Creating a shared drive that provides cross-team and cross-division access to information.
- Ensuring references are accessible for all staff who are teleworking.
- Developing a directory and training for new employees that provides an historical context and understanding of how information in the shared drive is organized.
- Creating an efficient process for review/surname of documents that accounts for different levels/paths of surname and maintains version control of documents and appropriate access for sensitive documents.
- Minimizing staff saving of personal work files on C drives and laptops.
- Providing SOP for how folders will be added to the structure, including where and by whom.
- Providing SOP for shared drive maintenance, administrative oversight and exit clearance protocol.

Objective: Enhance user interfaces on electronic applications including SharePoint, MSTeams, Share Drive, and OneDrive, by:

- Enabling quick views on MSTeams channels for assignments and correspondence requests.
- Creating easy access information tabs across MSTeams channels.
- Developing "How-To" guides and training for SharePoint, Teams, and Share Drive use.

Objective: Modernize record keeping practices and enhance record search and accessibility, by:

- Migrating paper records to electronic records per Department of the Interior policy.
- Developing SOP for file and folder naming conventions.

Objective: Provide access and awareness to all employees of safety plans, EEO/Diversity training, and other respectful workplace courses, by:

- Highlighting safety updates, plans, and Job Hazard Assessment (JHA) resources as a primary channel under the Main WA-ES Team channel.
- Conducting comprehensive outreach regarding safety and respectful workplace training opportunities to all employees and teams.
- Providing human resource guidance and confidence when handling Personally Identifiable Information (PII) and other sensitive administrative materials.
- Establishing annual safety training for new onboards and employee refresher training.

Objective: Streamline financial planning, execution, and budget operations internally and with external partners, by:

- Rolling out 25% budget in Quarter 2.
- Developing a Budget Deadline Calendar.
- Tracking agreements and funding related to species.
- Developing transparent statewide and programmatic criteria for funding opportunities and project ranking.
- Providing Financial Assistance training.
- Promoting the mentorship program.
- Providing clear and friendly communication when working with external partners and responding to financial or administrative requests.