

Washington Ecological Services

2023 in Review

What a year 2023 was! During the 50th anniversary of the Endangered Species Act, Washington Ecological Services took significant steps toward meeting many of the goals that we put forward in our 2021 Strategic Plan. Guided by that plan, we continue to focus our collective efforts on shared goals and the partnerships needed to conserve species in Washington.

We grew our team significantly this past year, increasing our capacity and opening up new opportunities. Through both additional training and new staff, we've added to the diversity of perspectives and backgrounds on our team, further boosting our capability to problem solve. I'm looking forward to further developing our people and skills in 2024 to help us face the complex threats that climate change, habitat loss, and invasive species pose.

We achieved some amazing conservation milestones in 2023. What follows in this document is a snapshot of just a few of these accomplishments.

If 2023 is any indication of what we are capable of, I am looking forward to seeing what 2024 brings.

Thanks for a great year!



Brad Thompson,
State Supervisor

2023 AT A GLANCE

CONSERVATION

RECOVERED
GOLDEN PAINTBRUSH

FINALIZED
ISLAND MARBLE BUTTERFLY
RECOVERY PLAN

OUTPLANTINGS
FOR NORTHERN WORMWOOD
UMTANUM DESERT BUCKWHEAT
AND SHOWY STICKSEED

NORTH CASCADES
GRIZZLY
DRAFT EIS AND PROPOSED
10(J) RULE RELEASED

OUR PEOPLE

ESTABLISHED
BIPARTISAN
INFRASTRUCTURE LAW
(BIL) TEAM

ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP
TRAINING PROVIDED
TO ALL EMPLOYEES

2 DIRECTORATE FELLOWS
AND MANNRS INTERNS

21 NEW EMPLOYEES
ONBOARDED

PARTNERSHIPS

OVER
\$1 MILLION
IN RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION
(RIP) AND CANDIDATE
CONSERVATION PROGRAM (CCP)
FUNDING TO 17 PARTNERS

8 LIAISON
POSITIONS

\$564,000
IN BIL FUNDING
TO SUPPORT PARTNER PROJECTS IN
THE SAGEBRUSH LANDSCAPE

97 CONSULTATIONS COMPLETED
USING THE NEW SALISH SEA
NEARSHORE PROGRAMMATIC
BIOLOGICAL OPINION

BY THE NUMBERS

FY 2023

**SECTION
4**

\$1 MILLION+
IN RIP & CCP
FUNDING

20
RIP & CCP
PROJECTS
BENEFITTING
14 SPECIES

1
SPECIES
RECOVERED

**SECTION
6**

\$440,000
IN TRADITIONAL
\$6 FUNDING

\$6.6 MILLION
IN NON-TRADITIONAL
\$6 FUNDING

**SECTION
7**

28
FORMAL
CONSULTATIONS

62
INFORMAL
CONSULTATIONS

129
COMPLIANCE
CHECKS ON
PROGRAMMATIC
CONSULTATIONS

**SECTION
10**

11
APPLICANTS
DEVELOPING
HCPs or SHAs

2
NEW HCPs
ISSUED

41
PERMITEES
IMPLEMENTING \$10
CONSERVATION
PROGRAMS

**PARTNERS
FOR FISH
& WILDLIFE**

\$360,000
IN NEW PROJECTS
FUNDED

**2 STREAM MILES
181 WETLAND ACRES
678 UPLAND ACRES
RESTORED**

FOR EVERY \$1 SPENT,
\$6
MATCHED
BY PARTNERS

NRDAR

11
SPILL DRILLS
OR MEETINGS
PLANNING
SPILL RESPONSE

**2.7 ACRES
RESTORED**

11
ACTIVE NRDAR
CASES

**FEDERAL
ACTIVITIES**

6
PROPOSED FISH
PASSAGE PROJECTS
ASSOCIATED WITH
HYDROPOWER

5
HYDROPOWER
PROJECTS ENGAGED IN
LICENSING OR
RELICENSING

\$3.4 MILLION
IN REPI FUNDING
FOR MILITARY
INSTALLATION
PROJECTS

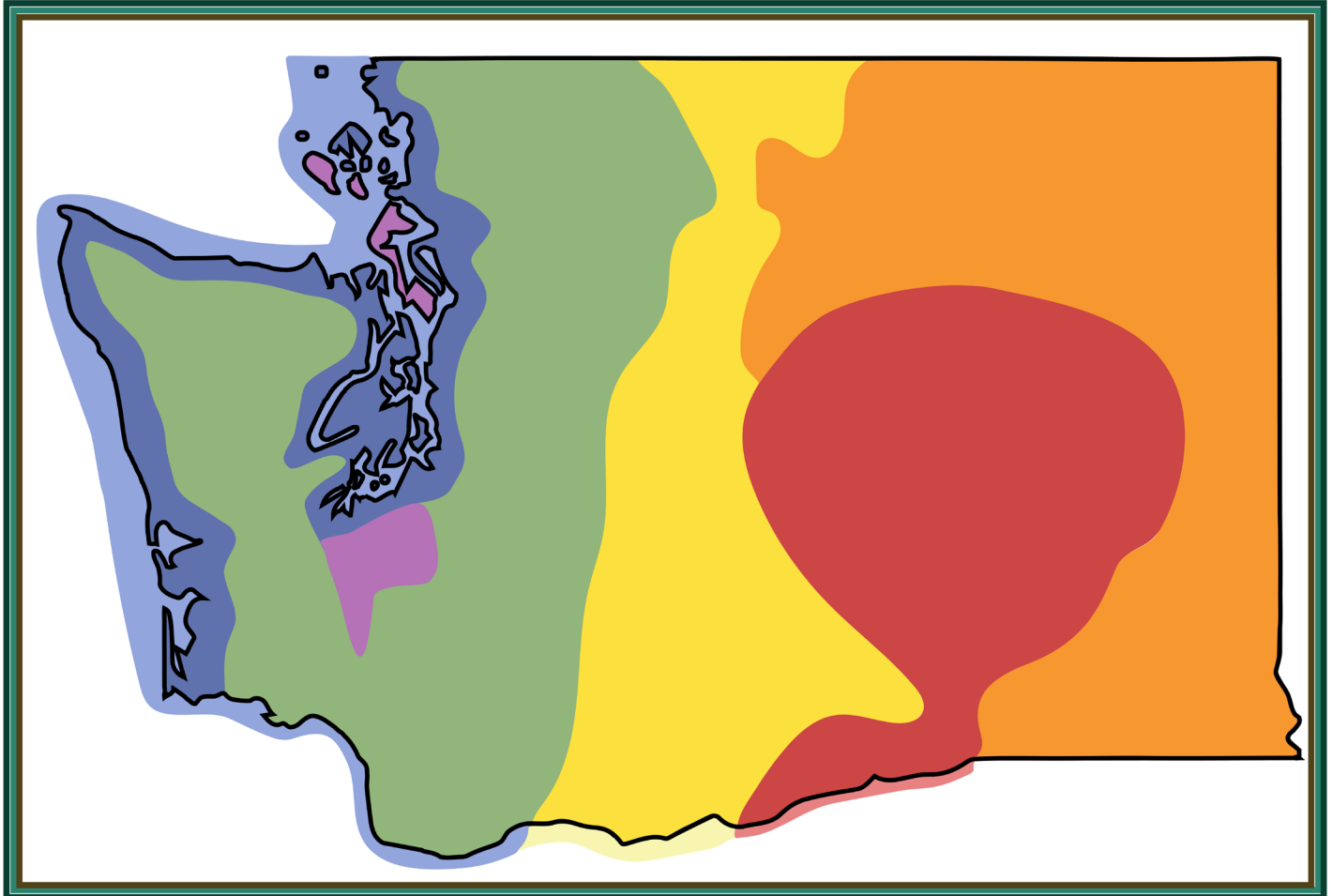
COASTAL

218
ACRES OF UPLAND
HABITAT
RESTORED

4
ACRES OF WETLAND
HABITAT
RESTORED

\$6.7 MILLION
IN NATIONAL
COASTAL WETLANDS
CONSERVATION
GRANTS

ACROSS WASHINGTON



- | | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| Eastslope Cascades | Coastal, Lowland, Aquatic, and Marine | Budget & Admin (statewide) |
| Inland Columbia Basin | Westside Forests | Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (statewide) |
| Shrub Steppe | Prairie and Salish Sea Islands | Coordinators (statewide) |

WELCOME ABOARD!

**IN FISCAL YEAR 2023, 21 NEW EMPLOYEES WERE
WELCOMED TO WASHINGTON ECOLOGICAL SERVICES!**

BIPARTISAN INFRASTRUCTURE LAW

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) team might be the newest addition to Washington ES, but they have hit the ground running.

The BIL team was first created in 2022 with a focus on interagency consultation to support projects funded by the 2021 legislation.

To support this important, timely work, the team was reorganized in the summer of 2023 and new Assistant Field Supervisor Marty Acker and Supervisor Lee Corum joined the expanding roster.

With most of the team's work relating to U.S. Forest Service projects, the BIL team naturally works closely with the Westside Forest and Eastslope Cascades teams.



IN FY 23, THE BIL TEAM COMPLETED:

- 6** INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS
- 3** FORMAL CONSULTATIONS
- 5** ADDITIONAL CONSULTATIONS INITIATED
- 10+** UPCOMING CONSULTATIONS WITH PRE-CONSULTATION TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE INITIATED

BUDGET AND ADMIN

The oil that keeps the WA-ES engine running! The Budget and Admin team is a critical part of statewide operations and in 2023, the team met some major milestones:

- Fully implemented the WA-ES Assignment Library as our office's collaborative assignment management tool and presented trainings to all employees
- Finalized Section 7 Program Workflow and presented trainings to all zone teams
- Presented WA-ES Customer Service Tools at the R1 Budget and Admin Workshop
- Collaborated with several R1 offices across all programs to develop customized tools for their stations.



NEW BUDGET & ADMIN INITIATIVES IN FY 23:

- Collaborated with R1 Records Specialists to develop the new Records SharePoint for filing electronic records consistently across R1 Ecological Services
- Developed and implemented a new Funding Memo process to organize funding authorization in Q1 and Q2 of the FY
- Developed new Budget Team SharePoint and system for organizing and delegating budget team assignments

- 23** ONBOARDINGS FOR NEW EMPLOYEES OR INTERNS
- 200** CORRESPONDENCE REQUESTS
- 300** TRAVEL REQUESTS
- 49** NEW FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AGREEMENTS AWARDED
- 400+** PURCHASE REQUESTS
- 100+** FWS EMPLOYEES ASSISTED WITH CREDENTIALING



The WA-ES Budget & Admin Team

SHRUB-STEPPE

Like the ecosystem itself, the Shrub-Steppe team's milestones for imperiled species in central Washington are expansive. In particular, FY 2023 was another year of critical habitat restoration in areas impacted by wildfire.

The team also notably welcomed Danielle Husband, who is serving as the Washington Sagebrush Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) Coordinator.



Columbia Basin pygmy rabbit

USFWS/A. LaValle

IN FY 23, SHRUB-STEPPE WAS AWARDED

\$564,000

IN BIL FUNDING THAT WILL RESTORE:

5
MILES OF
STREAM

100
ACRES
OF WET
MEADOW

>600
ACRES OF
UPLAND
HABITAT

In the two years since the BIL sagebrush initiative began, this team has partnered with 15 different agencies and organizations to develop 11 restoration projects in Washington's shrub-steppe ecosystem. With two more funding cycles to go, there is more conservation to come!



USFWS/D. Husband

Rock Island Creek in Douglas County is a Sage BIL site focused on restoring riparian areas for drought resistance and to support key species.

OTHER FY 2023 SHRUB-STEPPE HIGHLIGHTS:

- Collaborated with partners on recovery projects for listed and rare plants such as outplanting Umtanum desert buckwheat and northern wormwood at new locations, along with monitoring White Bluff's bladderpod and Ute ladies'-tresses.
- Alongside WDFW partners, the team ground-truthed several potential pygmy rabbit release sites using the 2022 habitat model.

INLAND COLUMBIA BASIN

A significant milestone for the ICB team in 2023 was a bull trout success story—the completion of a significant restoration project in the upper Asotin Creek watershed following a severe fire in 2021.

Funded by recovery dollars, this 2-year project provided important information on the continued presence of resident bull trout populations in the most severely burned areas, and used low-tech process-based restoration techniques to improve habitat for both resident and migrating fish.

The team partnered with U.S. Forest Service and worked with Anabran Solutions under a cooperative agreement to complete the work.

IN THE ASOTIN CREEK PROJECT:

8 TRIBUTARIES SAMPLED FOR BULL TROUT eDNA

5 TRIBUTARIES WITH BULL TROUT DETECTIONS

6.7 KM OF HABITAT SURVEYS COMPLETED

120 STRUCTURES PLACED IN 3 TRIBUTARIES



Stephen Bennett, Anabran Solutions

Lower-North Fork Asotin Creek, 2023.



USFWS/S. Dawney

The Asotin Creek project further contributes to the understanding of bull trout distribution in southeastern Washington and increases habitat connectivity in the watershed, achieving two key milestones for the ICB team.

OTHER FY 2023 ICB HIGHLIGHTS:

- Working with WDFW and the Kalispel Tribe to explore future bull trout introductions
- Continued work with Palouse Conservation District, Refuges and Fairchild Airforce Base on Spalding's catchfly recovery
- Partnership with WDFW on Selkirk grizzly bear recovery and human-bear conflict management

WESTSIDE FORESTS

The Westside Forests Zone encompasses the forested and alpine areas of the west slope of the Cascades, the Olympic Peninsula, and southwestern Washington.

Among the many accomplishments of this nine-member team, WSF staff completed a large 10-year programmatic consultation with the Bonneville Power Administration for vegetation



Columbia torrent salamander

C. Cousins

management along 900 miles of powerline transmission corridors in southern Washington. This new programmatic consultation will provide for species conservation and regulatory efficiency by reducing the consultation burden associated with routine actions.

OTHER FY 2023 WSF HIGHLIGHTS:

- Completion of a marbled murrelet biological report, in support of the 5-year status review
- Contributed to the species assessment for torrent salamanders
- Involvement in the relicensing applications for the three dams in the Skagit River Hydropower Project

25

**CONSULTATIONS
COMPLETED ON
FEDERAL PROJECTS**



WSF Zone team members and NPS staff on a site visit in Mt. Ranier National Park

USFWS/S. Worker

EASTSLOPE CASCADES

Covering the eastern slope of the Cascades, the Eastslope Cascades (ESC) team's work covers a wide variety of species, ranging from carnivores like lynx, grizzly bear, wolf, and wolverine, to narrow-range plants like Wenatchee Mountains checker-mallow and showy stickseed, and aquatic species like bull trout.

The ESC team was revamped in 2023, including the hiring of four new biologists and one supervisory biologist. The team is now fully staffed with six biologists and one supervisory biologist.

The expanded team includes two biologists devoted to Yakima Basin Integrated Plan to support more comprehensive coordination around bull trout conservation.



A collared lynx being released by Home Range Wildlife Research in an ESC-supported project

Home Range Wildlife Research

IN FY 2023, THE ESC TEAM:

- Supported successful RIP projects including Canada lynx genetics, developing strategies to establish new populations of Wenatchee Mountains checker-mallow, a habitat suitability model for showy stickseed, and completed outplantings for showy stickseed
- Provided local expertise on the grizzly bear draft EIS and proposed 10(j) rule
- Represented USFWS R1 on the lynx draft recovery plan and SSA addendum

**5 NEW ESC TEAM
MEMBERS IN FY23**

PRAIRIE AND SALISH SEA ISLANDS

Most of the species in the prairie ecosystem may remain close to the ground, but the achievements of the PSSI team in 2023 were colossal.

Their action-packed year featured the recovery of one species, the proposed listing of another, the finalization of recovery plans, major awards, and the forging of new partnerships.



Golden paintbrush was delisted in July due to its remarkable recovery

GOLDEN PAINTBRUSH RECOVERED!

DURING THE GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY OF THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

FY 2023 PSSI HIGHLIGHTS:

- Final recovery plan for the island marble butterfly
- Support in finalizing the Oregon spotted frog recovery plan
- Support for the proposed listing of western pond turtle
- NRCS programmatic biological opinion completion
- Expanded landowner partnerships through the new SW WA Grazing Association and SW WA Prairie Working Group
- Initiated efforts to create a native seed strategy



Erin Adams in island marble butterfly habitat on San Juan Island in May

\$2.4 MILLION

AWARDED TO THE JOINT BASE LEWIS-MCCHORD SENTINEL LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP TO SUPPORT PRAIRIE CONSERVATION

COASTAL LOWLAND AQUATIC MARINE

Surf's up! Boasting one of the most evocative acronyms in WA-ES, the CLAM zone encompasses much of coastal Washington, including estuaries, wetlands, shorelines, river channels, and floodplains.

FY 2023 CLAM HIGHLIGHTS:

- Completed consultation for the Skagit Steelhead Resource Management Plan
- Supported development of the western ridged mussel SSA and provided funds to the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation for species research
- Continued partnership with the Shoalwater Bay Indian Tribe



CLAM staff near Shoalwater Bay during the team's field day in May

to conserve western snowy plover and streaked horned lark, including technical assistance that lead to the Tribe receiving a \$186K Tribal Wildlife Grant

- Establishment of a trustee council for the Bremerton Gas Works NRDAR case



Oregon spotted frog

97 CONSULTATIONS COMPLETED

USING THE NEW SALISH SEA NEARSHORE PROGRAMMATIC BIOLOGICAL OPINION IN ITS FIRST YEAR

COORDINATORS

The Coordinators team brings together expertise and skills to support all WA-ES teams and help ensure a consistent approach to state-wide program implementation. The team serves as the centralized point of contact for the USFWS' Regional and Headquarter offices, while also providing program-specific expertise to WA-ES teams and external partners.



Habitat restoration at Samish Preserve with NRCS and the Whatcom County Amphibian Monitoring Program

WA-ES COORDINATORS:

- **Section 4 (Recovery)-**
Rose Agbalog
- **Section 4 (Classification)-**
Rebecca Migala
- **Section 7-**
Lisa Solberg Schwab
- **Communications-**
Andrew LaValle
- **Federal Activities-**
Betsy Gratton
- **GIS & Data Management-**
Markus Le
- **NRDAR/Contaminants-**
Michael Carlson
- **Partners for Fish & Wildlife-**
Nick George
- **Section 10-**
Marty Acker

MAJOR PROJECTS SUPPORTED BY MULTIPLE COORDINATORS IN FY 23:

- Golden paintbrush delisting
- Draft EIS and proposed 10(j) rule for North Cascades grizzly
- Final recovery plan for island marble butterfly
- Formation of a trustee council for the Bremerton Gas Works NRDAR case
- New partnerships through the SW WA Grazing Association
- Habitat restoration with partners at Samish Preserve
- Goldendale Pump Station draft EIS comments
- Complex Forest Service consultations

13 TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

DEVELOPED OR SUPPORTED BY COORDINATORS IN FY 23

IN LOVING MEMORY OF MARTHA JENSEN



This past year, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service family mourned the loss of our longtime friend and colleague, biologist Martha Jensen. Martha was a valuable part of our Ecological Services team in Washington for more than twenty years.

Her passion for the natural world was palpable, especially when it came to the species and coastal habitats that were the focus of her work, including snowy plovers and streaked horned larks. Prior to her time with the Service, Martha also

worked for the U.S. Forest Service on the Olympic Peninsula and in the state of Oregon. We continue to miss her in our professional and personal lives as we regularly think of the many ways she touched each of us through her years with WA-ES.

