

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: Interior Least Tern Final
Delisting Virtual Announcement Event Transcript**

January 12, 2021 10:30am-12:00pm ET

Closed Captioning provided by Alternative Communication Services, LLC

00:00:31.680 --> 00:00:42.270

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Hello everyone, I'd like to welcome you all to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's virtual announcement event for the final delisting of the interior least tern.

00:00:42.870 --> 00:00:49.620

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: We are going to give folks a few minutes here to join the webinar and then we will begin our event shortly. So please stay tuned.

00:00:50.310 --> 00:01:03.480

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: I do want to note that closed captioning is available by selecting the closed caption icon at the bottom of your zoom screen if you are using the zoom web portal or zoom app on your computer. Thank you.

00:01:53.820 --> 00:02:05.580

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Again, welcome everyone to today's virtual announcement event. We're going to give folks just a few more minutes here to join the webinar and then we will begin our event. So please stay tuned. Thank you.

00:02:30.330 --> 00:02:39.900

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Hello everyone, we're going to go ahead and get started with our virtual announcement event today. I would like to thank you all for joining us. We appreciate your time and participation.

00:02:40.620 --> 00:02:53.940

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: My name is Amanda Biedermann, and I'm going to be one of your meeting facilitators today. Additionally, I have several members of the US Fish and Wildlife Service and US Army Corps of Engineers with me on the webinar today.

00:02:58.200 --> 00:03:08.010

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: I will now briefly outline the order of today's virtual announcement event. First, staff will present on the final delisting of the interior and least tern.

00:03:08.670 --> 00:03:18.870

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: We will then show a short two-to-three-minute video about the interior least tern. Finally, we will have about 25 to 30 minutes remaining for a question-and-answer session,

00:03:19.350 --> 00:03:29.430

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: During which attendees can verbally ask questions relating to the final delisting and staff members will respond to those questions aloud for all participants to hear.

00:03:30.660 --> 00:03:36.060

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Before we move forward with our event, I'm going to go over some ground rules for the webinar today.

00:03:36.720 --> 00:03:47.370

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: First, your microphones and videos will be turned off for the duration of the event. You will only be unmuted if and when I unmute you during the question-and-answer session.

00:03:48.180 --> 00:03:54.810

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Second, this event is being recorded, and the recording and transcript of the event will be provided online.

00:03:55.800 --> 00:04:10.890

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Finally, as I said earlier, questions on the final delisting will be addressed during the question-and-answer session. We will do our best to address questions in the order they come in and to allow everyone an opportunity to voice their questions today.

00:04:11.970 --> 00:04:17.010

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: I will now turn it over to Regional Director Miranda to begin our virtual announcement event.

00:04:30.060 --> 00:04:36.630

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: Hello there. Welcome, everybody. Thank you, Amanda so much for organizing this important event.

00:04:37.140 --> 00:04:45.540

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: My name is Leopoldo Miranda. I am the Regional Director for the South Atlantic Gulf and Mississippi Basin regions of the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

00:04:46.140 --> 00:05:04.200

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: I would like to welcome everybody for this important event, a great day for conservation. Thank you for spending time with us to celebrate together. Now, I would like to introduce our US Fish and Wildlife Service Director, Aurelia Skipwith.

00:05:18.390 --> 00:05:27.390

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: Thank you very much, Regional Director Miranda. Good morning to everyone and thank you all for joining us on this very special occasion.

00:05:27.870 --> 00:05:37.830

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: It is a great day when the US Fish and Wildlife Service is able to announce a conservation success of the magnitude in which we are here today.

00:05:38.400 --> 00:05:47.430

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: And that is to celebrate the removal of the interior least tern from the list of threatened and endangered species under the ESA.

00:05:48.180 --> 00:05:57.780

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: We have a number of dignitaries and partners or their delegates that are in attendance, who I would like to recognize. Major General Diane Holland.

00:05:58.410 --> 00:06:18.930

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: Of the Corps Mississippi Valley Division; Brigadier General Christopher G. Beck of the Corps Southwestern Division; Francis Beth Coffey, Corps Director of Programs Northwestern Division; Sarah Parker Pauley, Director of the Missouri Department of Conservation,

00:06:20.160 --> 00:06:29.670

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: Gail Bingham, Chair of the Missouri River Recovery Implementation Committee; and John Pike, lead scientist for Duke Energy.

00:06:31.230 --> 00:06:39.660

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: Thanks to President Trump's and Secretary Bernhardt's commitment to engaging American citizens and partners to find solutions,

00:06:40.110 --> 00:07:00.210

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: We have been able to delist and downlist more species due to recovery than any other administration during its first four years. With the recovery of the interior least tern, we have delisted a total of 13 species and downlisted another seven.

00:07:01.320 --> 00:07:11.250

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: Supporting partnerships like those represented here today, streamlining burdensome regulations, and basing decisions on strong science

00:07:11.790 --> 00:07:31.950

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: And the rule of law has been the hallmark of the Trump administration success and the Service's ability to deliver wins

for local communities and wildlife. The interior least tern is an energetic little bird, standing only eight inches tall and weigh less than two ounces.

00:07:33.030 --> 00:07:46.620

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: Although diminutive in size, this migratory bird still manages to travel hundreds of miles between breeding and wintering grounds, traversing many rivers, like the Missouri and Mississippi.

00:07:47.820 --> 00:07:56.730

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: The interior least tern has battled back over the course of decades since it was protected under the Endangered Species Act in 1985.

00:07:57.750 --> 00:08:05.010

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: And now, thanks to the work of the US Fish and Wildlife Service and its many partners, the bird now has a bright future.

00:08:06.330 --> 00:08:13.290

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: When the bird was first listed, biologists estimated that there were only about 2,000 individuals left in the wild.

00:08:14.160 --> 00:08:29.130

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: Through the hard work and determination of federal and state partners and private organizations and industry, the tern's population has rebounded to almost 19,000 birds across 18 states.

00:08:30.240 --> 00:08:40.740

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: New strategies used by the Corps of Engineers, along with the tern's favorite waterways protected 80% of the birds nesting and forging habitats.

00:08:41.940 --> 00:08:50.610

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: Other federal, state, and private partners also implemented conservation agreements and management programs beneficial to the tern.

00:08:51.930 --> 00:09:05.310

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: The Service's collaborative work with our partners, and the fighting spirit of this wonderful little bird, are the proof that the Endangered Species Act can serve as a powerful tool to recover imperiled species.

00:09:06.540 --> 00:09:13.800

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: To be successful in our conservation mission, the Service must continue to engage and accommodate the needs of the people

00:09:14.280 --> 00:09:21.390

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: In the community and the communities who share the landscape with wildlife. That is why Secretary Bernhardt and I

00:09:21.900 --> 00:09:37.110

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: Are committed to working to keep working lands working, using science as the guide to our conservation efforts, and making room for recreational activities that support people and enhance our communities and their economies.

00:09:38.130 --> 00:09:49.170

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: Looking forward, we must continue these efforts. In closing, I would like to extend a heartfelt thanks to the many partners across the United States.

00:09:49.590 --> 00:09:58.230

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: The Corps, state agencies, NGOs, businesses, industries, and universities in this truly collaborative effort.

00:09:59.100 --> 00:10:14.400

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: You'll hear from some of these groups this morning as we celebrate a true conservation success story, the delisting of the interior least tern. Thank you for joining us today. And now, I turn it back over to Regional Director Miranda.

00:10:26.520 --> 00:10:37.980

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: Thank you so much, Director Skipwith. This is a great, great day, as I mentioned earlier, for conservation and for that little energetic bird that we all love.

00:10:39.120 --> 00:10:46.230

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: These accomplishments took many, many years to get to where we are today. And thanks to all the partners.

00:10:46.620 --> 00:10:52.740

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: And specifically, the Army Corps of Engineers and all the other conservation partners across the landscape.

00:10:53.400 --> 00:11:11.070

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: Lots of really good and strong science is behind this decision, and a great the habitat management and conservation from all of the partners involved. We are here today with the interior least tern fully recovered and the delisted from the Endangered Species Act.

00:11:12.090 --> 00:11:22.650

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: This is a large-scale landscape level accomplishment that involves monumental coordination and innovation. Many of our partners

00:11:23.580 --> 00:11:39.930

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: Use the tools available to us in different ways that we have not used before like Section 7(a)(1) of the Endangered Species Act was used to do proactive conservation by the Army Corps of Engineers for that, I thank you and everybody involved.

00:11:40.980 --> 00:11:50.100

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: This is also a really good example how together we can connect lands and waters to conserve fish, wildlife species, across the landscape.

00:11:51.600 --> 00:12:04.980

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: Thank you to all the scientists and the managers, the staff, from all the different agencies and institutions that made this a reality. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the US Army Corps of Engineers Mississippi Valley Division,

00:12:05.640 --> 00:12:23.640

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: Southwestern Division, and the Northwestern Division. Thank you so, so much for your contributions to this big accomplishment. And now, I would like to pass it on to Major General Diane Holland of the Mississippi Valley Division for her remarks. Thank you.

00:12:58.860 --> 00:13:03.150

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Hi, Major General Holland. I have you unmuted. You just need to turn on your video.

00:13:27.420 --> 00:13:30.240

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Major General Holland, can you hear us? I have you unmuted.

00:13:41.970 --> 00:13:43.500

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: There we go. I see your video.

00:13:48.180 --> 00:13:49.830

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Looks like you might still be muted.

00:14:12.930 --> 00:14:14.940

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: I'll try one more time to unmute you here.

00:14:28.650 --> 00:14:30.150

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: We can't quite hear you still.

00:14:32.190 --> 00:14:36.930

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: You might need to call into the meeting as well if your computer microphone is having issues.

00:14:45.090 --> 00:14:58.200

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Well, maybe, while we try and get that sorted, Regional Director Miranda, if you maybe want to go over to our next speaker, while Major General Holland continues to work on her microphone.

00:14:59.310 --> 00:15:02.790

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: So I'll turn it back over to Regional Director Miranda quickly.

00:15:06.090 --> 00:15:07.620

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: We will adjust.

00:15:09.930 --> 00:15:10.620

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Thank you.

00:15:13.050 --> 00:15:21.420

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: OK, so now, I would like to welcome Brigadier General Christopher Beck of the Southwestern Division for his remarks.

00:15:31.830 --> 00:15:33.150

USACE - Brig. Gen Christopher Beck: Okay, hopefully you can hear me.

00:15:34.650 --> 00:15:36.330

USACE - Brig. Gen Christopher Beck: Yes. Okay, great.

00:15:37.560 --> 00:15:47.910

USACE - Brig. Gen Christopher Beck: Regional Director and others, thank you very much. It's an honor to be here today, joining Major General Holland and Miss Coffey, on behalf of the US Army Corps of Engineers and our partners with the Fish and Wildlife Service.

00:15:48.510 --> 00:15:58.560

USACE - Brig. Gen Christopher Beck: For more than 14 years, the US Army Corps of Engineers Southwestern Divisions Tulsa and Little Rock districts have worked with the US Fish and Wildlife Service Southwestern Power Administration,

00:15:59.370 --> 00:16:05.370

USACE - Brig. Gen Christopher Beck: State conservation agencies, local partners, and universities to identify and resolve ecosystem management issues,

00:16:05.700 --> 00:16:15.030

USACE - Brig. Gen Christopher Beck: Including endangered species conservation associated with USACE civil works projects and the Arkansas, Canadian, and Red River systems within Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Texas.

00:16:15.510 --> 00:16:20.490

USACE - Brig. Gen Christopher Beck: It's exciting to be with you all today and know that our efforts have contributed to the comeback of the interior least tern.

00:16:21.240 --> 00:16:31.020

USACE - Brig. Gen Christopher Beck: The efforts of our team, including various releases from our multipurpose reservoirs to support the interior least terns, nests island construction, and surveying the rivers for interior least terns.

00:16:31.440 --> 00:16:39.870

USACE - Brig. Gen Christopher Beck: Our districts survey more than 700 miles of river three to four times per year in order to monitor the populations by counting the number of adults and fledglings.

00:16:41.160 --> 00:16:51.060

USACE - Brig. Gen Christopher Beck: We also use dredge material from navigation channel maintenance dredging to create and enhance nesting habitat along the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River navigation system or MKARNS.

00:16:51.480 --> 00:16:58.770

USACE - Brig. Gen Christopher Beck: Dredge material disposal within the MKARNS provides an opportunity for placement of material where it can support the low vegetated island conditions

00:16:59.370 --> 00:17:07.200

USACE - Brig. Gen Christopher Beck: Preferred by these birds by combining information on the life history of the inter least terns with routine maintenance trudging along the MKARNS.

00:17:07.410 --> 00:17:13.680

USACE - Brig. Gen Christopher Beck: We've been able to maintain suitable nesting habitat along the navigation system where the species had limited access for decades.

00:17:14.520 --> 00:17:18.780

USACE - Brig. Gen Christopher Beck: The work we do with our partners supports both the population and habitat baseline for the birds.

00:17:19.260 --> 00:17:30.450

USACE - Brig. Gen Christopher Beck: In fiscal year 2020, we saw more than 2,500 adults and more than 400 fledglings in the Tulsa District action area well above our compliance goal of around 1,300 and 300 respectively.

00:17:31.170 --> 00:17:35.160

USACE - Brig. Gen Christopher Beck: Our five-year average is more than 300 adults and 40 fledglings over our goal.

00:17:35.730 --> 00:17:44.670

USACE - Brig. Gen Christopher Beck: We have also seen 380 more adults along the Arkansas River in Arkansas over the last year with an increase every year outside of the 2019 flood.

00:17:45.330 --> 00:17:53.550

USACE - Brig. Gen Christopher Beck: This speaks to the dedication of our biologists, partners, and entire team, and this work will continue after the delisting as part of our conservation plan.

00:17:54.210 --> 00:18:00.690

USACE - Brig. Gen Christopher Beck: We're excited to be part of today's event and the larger effort to support the interior least tern. Thank you very much for allowing me to participate.

00:18:13.620 --> 00:18:20.250

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: Thank you, Brigadier General Beck for your remarks on your partnership for the interior least tern with the Fish and Wildlife Service.

00:18:21.390 --> 00:18:22.440

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: Really appreciate that.

00:18:23.670 --> 00:18:28.230

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: Now, maybe we can try to get Major General Holland.

00:18:31.350 --> 00:18:34.020

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: From the Mississippi Valley Division for her remarks.

00:18:39.990 --> 00:18:43.020

USACE - Maj. Gen Diana Holland: Hey, good morning. Can you hear us? Yes, yes.

00:18:44.460 --> 00:18:44.880

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: All right.

00:18:45.060 --> 00:18:45.450

USACE - Maj. Gen Diana Holland: Thank you.

00:18:52.200 --> 00:18:56.670

USACE - Maj. Gen Diana Holland: Alright, well this year is certainly been a year of being flexible and adaptable. Right.

00:18:57.690 --> 00:18:59.220

USACE - Maj. Gen Diana Holland: Well hey.

00:19:00.300 --> 00:19:10.620

USACE - Maj. Gen Diana Holland: Thanks General Beck for your comments. We appreciate the opportunity to participate in today's event. It is definitely an honor for me to represent the Mississippi Valley Division

00:19:10.980 --> 00:19:19.110

USACE - Maj. Gen Diana Holland: Along with the Southwestern Division and the Northwestern Division on this success story. We, the Corps, truly appreciate

00:19:20.160 --> 00:19:29.610

USACE - Maj. Gen Diana Holland: The Service's leadership in these programs, and we are very proud to be considered a partner and it's already been mentioned, you know, can't think of a better way to start

00:19:30.000 --> 00:19:38.010

USACE - Maj. Gen Diana Holland: Off 2021 but to recognize and celebrate the removal of the interior least tern from the endangered species list.

00:19:38.370 --> 00:19:47.550

USACE - Maj. Gen Diana Holland: I'm mindful that such a move is not easily accomplished. It takes many years, as was the case with this species and is truly a Herculean effort.

00:19:48.120 --> 00:19:57.180

USACE - Maj. Gen Diana Holland: And number one, and of course, that's probably the main theme of today's ceremony, is that this took partnership, stewardship, and ingenuity.

00:19:57.990 --> 00:20:14.070

USACE - Maj. Gen Diana Holland: The Corps has been a partner in this endeavor for more than 30 years, demonstrating that through collaboration, we can protect and recover an endangered species all along continuing to provide critical navigation and flood control benefit to the nation.

00:20:15.090 --> 00:20:23.820

USACE - Maj. Gen Diana Holland: In 1984, the Corps began a direct notching profit program to help mitigate sedimentation, which results in the loss of invaluable habitats.

00:20:24.570 --> 00:20:31.710

USACE - Maj. Gen Diana Holland: This led to the forging of a partnership between the Mississippi Valley Divisions lower districts, Vicksburg, Memphis, and New Orleans,

00:20:32.010 --> 00:20:45.030

USACE - Maj. Gen Diana Holland: And the US Fish and Wildlife Service's Southeast Region and the Lower Mississippi River Conservation Committee consisting of 12 state natural resource management and environmental quality agencies.

00:20:45.780 --> 00:20:56.340

USACE - Maj. Gen Diana Holland: Constant and consistent communication between all partners was critical. There were annual meetings that consisted of updates on endangered species' locations and habitat,

00:20:56.850 --> 00:21:08.490

USACE - Maj. Gen Diana Holland: The identification and consideration of using environmental engineering principles in the design and construction of river training structures for the benefit of the interior least tern and other species,

00:21:09.150 --> 00:21:14.490

USACE - Maj. Gen Diana Holland: And strengthening relationships between all parties are just some of the ways that we work together.

00:21:15.420 --> 00:21:26.610

USACE - Maj. Gen Diana Holland: Today, approximately 30% of dikes along the lower Mississippi River have been notched for environmental purposes. We are really proud of that effort and that statistic.

00:21:27.540 --> 00:21:40.050

USACE - Maj. Gen Diana Holland: Another example of Mississippi Valley Division's involvement with protecting and helping to bring back this species is located on the Mississippi River within the St. Louis district near the Melvin Price lock and dam.

00:21:40.560 --> 00:21:53.400

USACE - Maj. Gen Diana Holland: This project is known as the tern barge project. This decade-long collaborative floating habitat project involves turning barges into nesting areas for the least tern.

00:21:55.200 --> 00:22:00.450

USACE - Maj. Gen Diana Holland: All of these efforts supported steady progress on recovering the least tern population.

00:22:00.900 --> 00:22:08.850

USACE - Maj. Gen Diana Holland: And then in 2019 was one of the most successful of all nesting seasons with 47 nests and more than 60 chicks observed.

00:22:09.270 --> 00:22:21.330

USACE - Maj. Gen Diana Holland: Also observed for the first time ever, a previously banded tern chick showing the resilience of this species over time, truly good news and a critical step in reaching this milestone.

00:22:21.840 --> 00:22:29.100

USACE - Maj. Gen Diana Holland: So, in conclusion, once again, the Mississippi Valley Division of the Corps of Engineers is honored to play a role in this partnership,

00:22:29.430 --> 00:22:45.810

USACE - Maj. Gen Diana Holland: To not only deliver our program of concrete and steel, but to be a partner of choice leveraging that concrete and steel in support of the environment and conservation initiatives. Thank you for the opportunity to partner on this. And thank you for including us in your program.

00:22:51.600 --> 00:22:56.640

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: Thank you so much Major General Holland, nice to see you again. You are a great partner.

00:22:58.830 --> 00:23:07.410

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: And now I would like to welcome Beth Coffey from the Northwestern Division of the Army Corps of Engineers for her remarks. Thank you.

00:23:14.100 --> 00:23:20.310

USACE - Frances Coffey: Thank you for the opportunity to join you today. Brigadier General Pete Helmlinger, the commanding general of the Northwestern Division,

00:23:20.670 --> 00:23:24.480

USACE - Frances Coffey: sends his regrets for not being able to be a part of this historic event.

00:23:25.020 --> 00:23:34.950

USACE - Frances Coffey: The Northwestern Division is responsible for operating and maintaining its six mainstream reservoirs and the bank stabilization and navigation project along the Missouri River,

00:23:35.580 --> 00:23:54.210

USACE - Frances Coffey: which span from Montana to a confluence near St. Louis, Missouri. Within this vast territory, interior least tern utilize habitat along a large portion of Missouri River critical to their survival. They rely on a virgin sandbar habitat along Missouri river for nesting and moving

00:23:55.290 --> 00:24:01.920

USACE - Frances Coffey: Along the Missouri River. Sandbar habitat was significantly altered and reduce in abundance in the mid-1900s,

00:24:02.310 --> 00:24:10.770

USACE - Frances Coffey: Partly due to the congressionally-authorized construction and operation on the Missouri riverbank stabilization and navigation project in the lower Missouri River,

00:24:11.220 --> 00:24:15.780

USACE - Frances Coffey: As well as the Missouri River main stem reservoir system in the upper Missouri River.

00:24:16.650 --> 00:24:24.630

USACE - Frances Coffey: While these Corps of Engineer projects provide significant benefits to the nation, over time, we've had to adjust how we manage and maintain

00:24:24.960 --> 00:24:34.800

USACE - Frances Coffey: These large projects in a manner which allows us to continue to meet their authorized purposes yet reduces negative effects to species, such as the interior least tern.

00:24:35.910 --> 00:24:42.300

USACE - Frances Coffey: After the least tern was listed as endangered in the mid-1980s, we consulted in accordance with Endangered Species

00:24:42.720 --> 00:24:52.140

USACE - Frances Coffey: Act, with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, which resulted in a biological opinion pertaining to least tern and piping plovers in 1990.

00:24:52.650 --> 00:25:06.480

USACE - Frances Coffey: And again, after the listing of the pallid sturgeon, resulting in a biological opinion in 2000 and 2003, we began modifying operations of a reservoir during the least tern nesting season.

00:25:07.470 --> 00:25:17.730

USACE - Frances Coffey: In the mid-1980s to reduce impacts, such as nest inundation to this important to this important species, while continuing to serve authorized purposes.

00:25:18.450 --> 00:25:27.750

USACE - Frances Coffey: We also began implementation of an extensive bird monitoring program in the real early 1990s to document trends, incidental take,

00:25:28.350 --> 00:25:34.650

USACE - Frances Coffey: Birth productivity, and provide important information to our water management operations and the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

00:25:35.550 --> 00:25:41.880

USACE - Frances Coffey: Additionally, we monitor sandbar habitat acreages through acquisition and analysis of aerial imagery.

00:25:42.570 --> 00:25:55.740

USACE - Frances Coffey: Our water management staff and biologists meet weekly with the US Fish and Wildlife Service during the bird nesting season to discuss the water forecast projection of nest flooding and management considerations.

00:25:56.850 --> 00:26:14.460

USACE - Frances Coffey: In addition to refining reservoir operations, we also implemented other actions, such as mechanically constructing a virgin sandbar habitat, controlling predators, managing vegetation, and moving nests at the risk of flooding and signing sandbars to reduce nest disturbance.

00:26:16.050 --> 00:26:25.170

USACE - Frances Coffey: In 2013, working collaboratively, the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Missouri River Recovery Implementation Committee, Mr. Rick, who's represented today by Gail Bingham,

00:26:25.680 --> 00:26:37.380

USACE - Frances Coffey: We undertook an extensive scientific effects analysis that led to the development of the Missouri River Recovery Management Plan. This management plan consists of an environmental impact statement

00:26:39.480 --> 00:26:50.550

USACE - Frances Coffey: And biological assessment that was based on best available science and included a scientifically based science and adaptive management plan. We received a new biological opinion and

00:26:51.780 --> 00:26:59.730

USACE - Frances Coffey: With a no jeopardy determination. Information generated throughout the development of the Missouri River Recovery Management Plan

00:27:00.060 --> 00:27:09.720

USACE - Frances Coffey: And decades of monitoring on the Missouri River provided important contributions to understand least tern population dynamics and aided the US Fish and Wildlife Service

00:27:10.170 --> 00:27:22.470

USACE - Frances Coffey: As part of this delisting process. I'm excited to see the outcome of all this effort and collaboration and proud of the impact our Corps of Engineers professionals have contributed to the success. Thank you.

00:27:41.100 --> 00:27:52.200

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: Thank you for those remarks. Major General Holland, Brigadier General Beck, and Ms. Coffey. I'd like to honor your Divisions with this token of our gratitude.

00:27:52.860 --> 00:28:05.970

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: A mounted interior least tern. This decoy symbolizes your agency's work and helping bring us to the point of removing the interior least tern from the Endangered Species Act.

00:28:06.840 --> 00:28:21.510

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: The inscription on the mount reads, "On behalf of the US Fish and Wildlife Service, this award is presented for exceptional contributions toward recovery of the interior least tern - January 2021."

00:28:22.860 --> 00:28:33.900

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: Please accept these with our sincere gratitude for all that your agency has accomplished for this species. So our staff will be sending out these lovely awards to you after today's event.

00:28:34.980 --> 00:28:48.300

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: Next, we have some other partners with us here today that we'd like to recognize. Representing the Missouri Department of Conservation is Director Sarah, Harkey, Parker Pauley. Thank you for joining us.

00:29:01.860 --> 00:29:10.890

MDC - Sara Pauley: Good morning Director Skipwith, and so many of our partners. It is an absolute delight to join you this morning from Missouri.

00:29:11.400 --> 00:29:19.500

MDC - Sara Pauley: And you can't see them, but I am joined by my cupboard, who is Deputy Director for the Missouri Department of Conservation, and Jason Summers,

00:29:20.190 --> 00:29:28.920

MDC - Sara Pauley: Who is chief of our science branch, as they and their staff have been very instrumental in also getting us to this point.

00:29:29.820 --> 00:29:44.310

MDC - Sara Pauley: The Missouri Department of Conservation is absolutely delighted to be part of this event today, especially to acknowledge all of the hard work and collaborative efforts that have gotten us here. This really is already a highlight of 2021.

00:29:46.350 --> 00:29:57.570

MDC - Sara Pauley: As the Director and Director Skipwith noted, we often get the opportunity to celebrate moments like this, but it's really the work of the team,

00:29:58.440 --> 00:30:08.880

MDC - Sara Pauley: Including our own team members here at the Missouri Department of Conservation over the last few decades that are the real heroes of this success story.

00:30:09.900 --> 00:30:20.400

MDC - Sara Pauley: In May of 1985, the Fish and Wildlife Service, of course, listed the population of the least tern that existed throughout the interior of the United States as an endangered species.

00:30:20.940 --> 00:30:32.610

MDC - Sara Pauley: Within a year of that listing, the Missouri Department of Conservation began examining various aspects of tern population dynamics along the middle and lower Mississippi River.

00:30:33.300 --> 00:30:43.890

MDC - Sara Pauley: The research implemented by the MDC team helped guide recovery planning and restoration efforts that were defined in the 1990 recovery plan.

00:30:44.700 --> 00:30:54.390

MDC - Sara Pauley: Now initially MDC research on terns along the Mississippi River was led by John Smith, who ultimately became Deputy Director of the Department.

00:30:55.200 --> 00:31:02.910

MDC - Sara Pauley: Later John collaborated with the late Dr. Rochelle Rankin who was a wildlife research ecologist for us.

00:31:03.780 --> 00:31:14.460

MDC - Sara Pauley: Their research efforts that John and Roe, as we called her, conducted led to six peer reviewed journal publications on topics such as nesting, habitat needs,

00:31:14.940 --> 00:31:28.380

MDC - Sara Pauley: Reproductive success, chick survival, annual adult survival rates, tern site fidelity and dispersal, and effects of river hydrology and management on reproductive success.

00:31:29.310 --> 00:31:37.620

MDC - Sara Pauley: All of these publications were critical in filling in the information gaps for assisting and managing the species towards recovery.

00:31:38.610 --> 00:31:49.440

MDC - Sara Pauley: During the past 30 years, others have conducted more research and monitoring throughout the range of interior least terns, utilizing previous lessons learned from John and Roe.

00:31:50.250 --> 00:31:57.870

MDC - Sara Pauley: Recently, these additional research and monitoring efforts, and with funding from the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Corps of Engineers,

00:31:58.410 --> 00:32:07.770

MDC - Sara Pauley: A complex habitat driven range wide population dynamic model for the species has been developed by the American Bird Conservancy.

00:32:08.520 --> 00:32:19.080

MDC - Sara Pauley: So this early research and this model, along with long-term monitoring efforts, have helped us be where we are today with delisting the species.

00:32:20.070 --> 00:32:28.830

MDC - Sara Pauley: The Missouri Department of Conservation is very proud to have joined with the partners on this call and others to be on the ground floor of these efforts

00:32:29.190 --> 00:32:36.210

MDC - Sara Pauley: And a long-term collaborator. And while many people are responsible for the species recovery and delisting,

00:32:36.600 --> 00:32:44.880

MDC - Sara Pauley: We are especially thankful for the early efforts of John and Roe and their roles in conserving the interior least tern.

00:32:45.780 --> 00:32:56.610

MDC - Sara Pauley: If not for John and Roe, I'm not sure that we would be celebrating perhaps the great conservation success that we are today. Thank you so much for letting us join in the celebration.

00:33:12.150 --> 00:33:13.170

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: I guess I was on mute.

00:33:14.580 --> 00:33:24.540

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: The mute button. Thank you. Thank you, Sarah. And it's always a pleasure to see you. We are very grateful for partners such as the Missouri Department of Conservation,

00:33:25.050 --> 00:33:31.230

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: And realize that recovery of threatened and endangered species couldn't be done without such collaboration.

00:33:31.980 --> 00:33:52.710

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: And on behalf of the Service, we would also like to present Missouri Department of Conservation with the mounted least tern decoy as a symbol of our gratitude for all your agency has accomplished. Next, we have Miss Gail Bingham, the chair of the Missouri Recovery Implementation Committee.

00:34:10.020 --> 00:34:20.250

MRRIC - Gail Bingham: Thank you very much, Director Skipwith. The Missouri River Recovery Implementation Committee is an advisory committee to the US Army Corps of Engineers and the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

00:34:21.120 --> 00:34:33.660

MRRIC - Gail Bingham: MRRIC was authorized by Congress in the 2007 Water Resources Development Act. It has seats for 29 Native American tribes that are located within or with historical ties to the basin,

00:34:34.320 --> 00:34:45.030

MRRIC - Gail Bingham: Representatives of eight basin states, and 29 representatives of diverse stakeholder interest linked to the river. These included agriculture, environment and conservation,

00:34:45.510 --> 00:34:58.200

MRRIC - Gail Bingham: Fish and wildlife, flood control, hydro and thermal power, irrigation, local government, major tributaries navigation, recreation, water quality, water supply, and an at large category.

00:34:59.820 --> 00:35:08.640

MRRIC - Gail Bingham: USACE and the US Fish and Wildlife Service or the lead agencies and representatives of federal agencies with responsibilities in the basin participate as non-voting members.

00:35:09.780 --> 00:35:14.730

MRRIC - Gail Bingham: On behalf of MRRIC, I would like to express my sincere appreciation for the partnership

00:35:15.270 --> 00:35:23.310

MRRIC - Gail Bingham: That both the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Corps of Engineers have demonstrated with the state's tribes and stakeholders in the Missouri River Basin.

00:35:24.120 --> 00:35:33.840

MRRIC - Gail Bingham: The professionals of both agencies consistently take the time to answer questions, listen to diverse perspectives, and work collaboratively through the adaptive management process.

00:35:34.710 --> 00:35:42.450

MRRIC - Gail Bingham: This partnership has only grown stronger over the years, and I look forward to continued collaboration in the years ahead. Thank you again.

00:35:53.010 --> 00:36:06.990

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: Thank you, Miss Bingham. We are very grateful for the partnership of Missouri River Recovery Implementation Committee and on behalf of the Service, I would also like to present your group with the mounted interior least tern decoy

00:36:09.180 --> 00:36:15.600

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: As a symbol of our gratitude for all that your group has accomplished in helping to recover the interior least tern.

00:36:16.650 --> 00:36:36.510

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: Also with us today representing one of our industry partners is John Pike, lead scientist for Duke Energy. Signed in 1999, Duke Energy developed the very first and only habitat conservation plan for the interior least tern. Mr. Pike, thank you for joining us today.

00:36:51.540 --> 00:37:01.560

Duke Energy - John Pike: Thank you and good morning everyone. I appreciate this opportunity to say a few words on behalf of Duke Energy regarding interior least tern use of southwestern Indiana.

00:37:01.950 --> 00:37:06.810

Duke Energy - John Pike: Soon after the interior least tern was listed as a federal endangered species in May of 1985,

00:37:07.110 --> 00:37:15.720

Duke Energy - John Pike: A single pair of least tern was discovered nesting in 1986 on the splitter dyke in the cooling pond at Duke Energy at the Gibson Generating Station in Gibson County, Indiana.

00:37:16.290 --> 00:37:24.240

Duke Energy - John Pike: Since this initial discovery, Duke Energy has worked in close cooperation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Indiana Department of Natural Resources

00:37:24.600 --> 00:37:36.480

Duke Energy - John Pike: To maintain favorable conditions for successful propagation of the species. Over the last 34 years, the population of least terns has steadily grown and expanded beyond this initial nesting area.

00:37:37.080 --> 00:37:47.130

Duke Energy - John Pike: Least terns are now also nesting at the US Fish and Wildlife Service's Cambridge wildlife area next to Gibson Generating Station, as well as several other areas in the state of Indiana.

00:37:47.880 --> 00:37:54.030

Duke Energy - John Pike: This area has quickly become one of the largest nesting areas for the least tern east of the Mississippi River.

00:37:54.630 --> 00:38:06.960

Duke Energy - John Pike: To date, an estimated 1740 least terns have been fledged with a success rate of approximately one fledgling per pair from the Gibson Station and Cambridge properties.

00:38:07.410 --> 00:38:21.570

Duke Energy - John Pike: To sum up, it's been an honor to work so closely with the state and federal officials to help restore the least tern population. This cooperation between all involved has been tremendous throughout the years. We thank you for this opportunity to help celebrate today's milestone event.

00:38:33.120 --> 00:38:42.390

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: Thank you, Mr. Pike and on behalf of the US Fish and Wildlife Service, I would also like to present to you, Duke Energy, with the mounted interior least tern decoy

00:38:42.870 --> 00:38:48.300

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: As a symbol of our gratitude for all that Duke Energy has done to help recover the species.

00:38:49.050 --> 00:38:57.090

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: Fortunately for us, with partners like the ones we've heard from today, we have an incredibly long list of "thank you" to handout.

00:38:57.690 --> 00:39:05.190

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: Spanning 18 states and multiple service regions, the recovery of species has been a huge partnership effort

00:39:05.670 --> 00:39:14.250

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: With State Natural Resource agencies across 18-state range of the interior least tern, like the Missouri Department of Conservation;

00:39:15.090 --> 00:39:28.860

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: Partnerships and working groups like the Missouri River Recovery Implementation Committee, the Missouri River Natural Resources Committee's Tern and Plover Committee, the Lower Mississippi River Conservation Committee,

00:39:29.940 --> 00:39:35.790

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: The Missouri River Navigation Caucus, and the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program;

00:39:36.870 --> 00:39:50.190

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: Industry partners like Duke Energy and the Southwestern and Western Area Power Administrations; and non-governmental organizations like the American Bird Conservancy and the Nature Conservancy.

00:39:51.090 --> 00:39:58.500

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: This is a lengthy list and reflects a huge commitment of all of our partners. And while we weren't able to all gather

00:39:58.920 --> 00:40:15.510

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: Here for this event, we will be sending out more of these mounted tern decoys in the days to come, honoring those of you have worked with us to recover the species. Moving on, we would terribly be remiss if we did not recognize the hard work of our own employees.

00:40:16.560 --> 00:40:28.140

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: Paul Hartfield, fish and wildlife biologist in the Mississippi Ecological Services Field Office, has been the recovery lead for the interior least tern for several decades.

00:40:29.130 --> 00:40:44.310

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: His pioneering spirit showed how the use of Section seven of the Endangered Species Act specifically section 7 of the ESA could be used to achieve post-delisting management and monitoring commitments for the least tern

00:40:45.360 --> 00:40:55.140

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: Indeed, the interior least tern is the first species to be delisted where Section 7(1)(a) conservation has played a major role.

00:40:56.220 --> 00:41:10.350

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: Paul has embodied the mission of the US Fish and Wildlife Service of "working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people."

00:41:11.370 --> 00:41:31.500

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: It is fair to say that Paul has dedicated the better part of his professional career protecting the interior least tern. And in fact, as I understand it, Paul's dedication has caused him to delay his retirement, and he wanted to be here with us today and I am so glad that he is.

00:41:32.550 --> 00:41:47.130

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: PAUL, it's meeting employees like you that have made my job as Director of the Service a true honor. The dedication of folks like yourself humble me. So thank you for all that you do and all you have done for the interior least tern.

00:41:48.240 --> 00:41:53.580

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: I now present you with this token of our gratitude as well.

00:41:54.900 --> 00:41:56.460

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: And we'll turn it over to you, Paul.

00:42:15.810 --> 00:42:16.500

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: Can y'all hear me.

00:42:18.510 --> 00:42:19.920

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Yes, we can Paul. Thank you.

00:42:20.730 --> 00:42:26.550

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: Okay. Well, I wasn't expecting to speak today to tell you the truth, but it's truly

00:42:27.900 --> 00:42:39.480

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: Been a work of multiple people over multiple decades. So I kind of hate to take credit where credit is not necessarily do a lot of folks who have retired,

00:42:40.020 --> 00:42:56.850

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: That have gone on, that contributed so much to this recovery effort. And we, I really wish we could acknowledge every one of them, but we'd be here all day. Anyway, I'd like to give my thanks to everybody that supported us through this to all the cooperation, it's been quite a feat.

00:42:57.990 --> 00:42:58.860

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: Particularly to my

00:43:00.090 --> 00:43:17.160

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: Comrades and pulling together the five-year review, Rich Fisher and Casey Lot, as well as others in the scientific environment that contributed to us so much. I appreciate and I'm very honored by this. Thank you very much.

00:43:28.980 --> 00:43:42.270

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: Thank you, Paul. And congratulations on your upcoming retirement. And I'm sure those you'll leave behind at the Mississippi Ecological Services Field Office and across the Service will miss you greatly

00:43:43.800 --> 00:43:46.980

USFWS - Dir. Aurelia Skipwith: So Regional Director Miranda, I now turn things back over you.

00:43:57.900 --> 00:44:07.890

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: Thank you so much. Director Skipwith, Paul, John, Gail, Sarah. I really appreciate all the efforts from that, from your teams

00:44:08.430 --> 00:44:23.880

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: In celebrating this great accomplishment. And what we heard today, is that a key word is that together we can accomplish great things like the recovery of the interior least tern and its ecosystem.

00:44:25.500 --> 00:44:33.870

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: I would like to say thank you again for everybody joining us today and in this big celebration. We need to do things like this.

00:44:34.170 --> 00:44:46.410

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: Every time that we have a conservation success, we need to acknowledge that, celebrate it, because that will bring even more conservation on the ground for all the fish and wildlife and plant species across our nation.

00:44:46.950 --> 00:44:59.490

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: Thank you so much. And now I would like to ask all of you to wait a little bit longer here because we would like to share a beautiful video about this great accomplishment.

00:45:00.720 --> 00:45:01.530

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: Thank you so much.

[video about the interior least tern plays (closed captioning provided)]

00:47:35.610 --> 00:47:45.240

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: What a great video, beautiful pictures, and again, great accomplishment. And with that, we, we conclude the

00:47:47.730 --> 00:47:52.050

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: Announcement, but we will open up for questions and answers

00:47:53.130 --> 00:47:53.550

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: For all the participants.

00:47:54.750 --> 00:47:57.840

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: Here I'll pass it on to Amanda.

00:48:00.600 --> 00:48:07.290

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Thank you. Regional Director Miranda. I'll actually ask before we get started with our question-and-answer session today,

00:48:07.680 --> 00:48:19.080

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: If you would just like to read the list of those who will be acting as our Q&A moderators today so that all the attendees can know who will be responding to their questions today.

00:48:25.980 --> 00:48:27.480

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: I'll be glad to do that.

00:48:29.160 --> 00:48:42.960

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: So thank you, Amanda. Again, representing the US Fish and Wildlife Service for the Q&A session is Kristi Young, she is the Deputy Chief of the Division of Conservation and Classification for the Southeast Region.

00:48:44.250 --> 00:48:53.490

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: Also, we're going to have Paul Hartfield that we met with a few minutes ago. And he's a fish and wildlife biologist from the Mississippi

00:48:54.420 --> 00:49:03.930

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: Ecological Services Field Office. We're going to have Steve Ricks. He is the field supervisor of the Mississippi Ecological Services Field Office.

00:49:04.500 --> 00:49:20.010

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: We will also have Cary Norquist, the Deputy Field Supervisor of the Mississippi Field Office. Representing the US Army Corps of Engineers, we will have Beth Coffey, Director of Programs of the Northwestern Division.

00:49:21.300 --> 00:49:25.710

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: □ Andrea Murdock-McDaniel, Chief of Operations for the Southwestern Division.

00:49:26.730 --> 00:49:30.630

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: And Mary Grunet, Public Affairs Chief for the Southwestern Division.

00:49:32.010 --> 00:49:35.610

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: I will turn it over, back to you Amanda, to start the Q&A session.

00:49:40.710 --> 00:49:43.260

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Great, thank you. Regional Director Miranda.

00:49:45.060 --> 00:49:52.050

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Hello everyone. Again, my name is Amanda Biedermann, and I'm going to be the moderator for the question-and-answer session today.

00:49:52.830 --> 00:50:00.750

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: This Q&A portion of the meeting will last approximately 25 to 30 minutes or until about 12:30pm Eastern Time.

00:50:01.470 --> 00:50:11.670

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: The intent of this question-and-answer session is to answer any process-related questions you have for staff on the final delisting of the interior least tern.

00:50:12.270 --> 00:50:18.150

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: We will only be responding to questions submitted verbally today using the raise hand feature in zoom.

00:50:18.930 --> 00:50:27.930

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: I will first go over instructions for how to ask a question using the raise hand feature if you are using the zoom web platform or zoom app.

00:50:28.530 --> 00:50:36.750

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: After we have gone through questions submitted via the zoom web platform or zoom app, we will then move on to participants calling in over the phone today

00:50:37.110 --> 00:50:46.800

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Who would like to ask a question. So please stay tuned for those instructions. At this time, if you have a question and you are using the zoom web platform or zoom app,

00:50:47.280 --> 00:50:55.500

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Please go ahead and click on the raise hand icon at the bottom of your zoom screen to let staff know you would like to verbally ask a question.

00:50:56.070 --> 00:51:05.880

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: If you hover your mouse over the bottom of your zoom screen, that raise hand icon should appear. And you may need to exit the full screen view in zoom in order to see this icon.

00:51:06.660 --> 00:51:11.310

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Once your hand is raised and it is your turn to ask your question, I will

00:51:11.700 --> 00:51:21.810

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Identify you by your zoom name in the participants list. I will then unmute you so that you can verbally ask your question and then put you back on you after you have asked your question.

00:51:22.410 --> 00:51:28.920

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: If applicable, please identify the organization or group you are representing before asking your question today.

00:51:29.700 --> 00:51:36.090

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: A staff member will then respond to your question aloud for all participants to hear. And we will try to answer

00:51:36.630 --> 00:51:47.580

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Or call on participants in the order that we see hands raised today. Please note, however, that there may be a bit of a pause between asking your question and a staff member responding to your question.

00:51:48.330 --> 00:51:54.510

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: So again, I have these instructions all up on the screen today. I see that we already have a few raised hands.

00:51:55.530 --> 00:52:06.180

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: So at this point, I'm going to unmute all of our Q & A panelists, so that they can be ready to respond to your question. And I'll go to our first raised hand on the list.

00:52:11.880 --> 00:52:16.230

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: So if you'll just give me a second here. I will finish unmuting everyone.

00:52:26.550 --> 00:52:30.360

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Okay, there we go. We have our entire team, I believe, unmuted now.

00:52:32.370 --> 00:52:45.990

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: And so I will then go to our attendee list, and I will just go based on the first hand that I see raised, and so that is Anne Millbrook. So, Anne, I'm going to go ahead and ask you to unmute yourself.

00:52:50.700 --> 00:52:51.090

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: There we go.

00:52:52.020 --> 00:52:52.950

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Yep, we can hear you.

00:52:54.360 --> 00:53:10.350

Anne Millbrooke: First of all, I'd like to thank everyone for their decades of work on the interior least tern. I've been following it for 10 years, reading reports and such. And

00:53:11.610 --> 00:53:16.500

Anne Millbrooke: You talk about 18 states, you always list Montana.

00:53:17.550 --> 00:53:35.910

Anne Millbrooke: But there's never anything specific about what's being done in Montana, other than Peck Dam releases water for what's being done outside

of Montana. And so my question is, what's been, what has been done in Montana?

00:53:38.220 --> 00:53:45.840

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Great, thank you. And I'll go ahead and put you back on mute and lower your hand, and we'll have a staff member respond to that question.

00:53:49.470 --> 00:53:50.730

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: So Christina. This is

00:53:52.950 --> 00:54:03.210

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: Yeah, this is Paul Hartfield. There's a, not a whole lot of habitat Montana. I know that the small nesting colonies, they are, some of them have declined in recent years.

00:54:04.800 --> 00:54:10.980

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: But the state monitors those colonies and they've been good partners, keeping up with what's going on.

00:54:12.390 --> 00:54:17.670

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: I hope that answers your question. It's right on the very periphery of the range by the way, the extreme northern part of the range.

00:54:19.980 --> 00:54:24.720

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: I would add though that this is the least tern, is what's called a meta population.

00:54:25.230 --> 00:54:37.770

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: It's a large number of very small populations distributed over a wide geographical area. And while some of the smaller populations, sub populations may seem to be insignificant,

00:54:38.160 --> 00:54:57.360

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: Actually small populations play a huge role in meta populations. So, Montana has a lot of wide-open spaces still left of fairly good habitat. It's just on the very periphery of the range. So, there hasn't been a whole lot going on there. Hope that answers your question.

00:55:02.070 --> 00:55:14.460

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Great. Thank you, Paul for that response. We'll go ahead and move on to our next raised hand and I see that is Jordan Smith. So I'm going to go ahead and unmute you. Jordan.

00:55:22.800 --> 00:55:23.550

Jordan Smith: Hello. Can you hear me?

00:55:24.060 --> 00:55:25.470

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Yes, we can hear you, Jordan.

00:55:26.580 --> 00:55:43.860

Jordan Smith: First of all, thanks for this great presentation. I really appreciate this opportunity to really celebrate this monumental success. Just a quick question. And it's kind of a complex question. So we, we've received guidance for the post delisting of the interior lease tern.

00:55:45.000 --> 00:56:02.250

Jordan Smith: And so I guess I'm wondering for the entities that are under a biological opinion, to what extent do they need to continue to fulfill those complete monitoring efforts? So, for example, some biological opinions might include

00:56:03.600 --> 00:56:09.780

Jordan Smith: Nesting enclosure areas or for nest moving things, such as that and so

00:56:11.070 --> 00:56:23.640

Jordan Smith: From the, from the post delisting guidance. It looks like it's kind of basically monitoring. Are they still required under the biological opinion to continue those additional actions as well?

00:56:26.250 --> 00:56:33.480

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Great. Thank you, Jordan, I'll go ahead and put you back on you and lower your hand, and I'll let a staff member respond to your question.

00:56:35.730 --> 00:56:47.670

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: Again, I can respond to that. No, by law, Jordan, they don't have to continue to do everything in the biological opinions, but this is one of the really neat things about this recovery,

00:56:48.090 --> 00:56:56.850

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: Is we've worked with the Corps over the last couple of decades, at least to come up with these programs incorporating conservation directly into their programs.

00:56:57.180 --> 00:57:05.010

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: That's what the Director was talking about, and the Regional Director, were talking about when they, when they reference Section 7(a)(1).

00:57:05.970 --> 00:57:13.710

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: This is the way the Act was meant to be done when they originally drafted the Act. Recovery was supposed to come through

00:57:14.370 --> 00:57:31.050

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: Cooperation between federal agencies that had the potential to affect habitats. That's what we've done with this species. In this case, the cool thing about it is that I don't know if you've heard of the concept of conservation-reliant species

00:57:32.130 --> 00:57:42.960

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: Which theoretically will need conservation attention just simply to survive. So we can build conservation directly into the federal programs.

00:57:43.260 --> 00:57:49.770

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: That's what the Northwest Division has done, the Southwest Division has done under their active biological opinions.

00:57:50.760 --> 00:58:02.670

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: The Mississippi Valley Division did it on their own without a biological opinion and essentially, they've converted a lot of these actions into simply best management practices

00:58:03.450 --> 00:58:11.220

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: Within their operations so that a lot of this will go on where it's needed. Where it's not needed, it can be stopped.

00:58:12.120 --> 00:58:25.530

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: It's an incredibly resilient bird. That's the other thing that we've learned through this species. So some things will continue, simply because they're built into the programs. Now, other things will stop simply because they're not necessary for survival.

00:58:31.830 --> 00:58:34.500

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Great. Thank you, Paul for that response again.

00:58:35.070 --> 00:58:43.770

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: I don't see any raised hands at the time. So I'm going to again just read through the instructions for everyone. And then I'll also read through the phone instructions.

00:58:44.190 --> 00:58:55.740

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: So again, if you do have a question today that you would like to ask staff members, please go ahead and use that raise hand feature through raise hand icon that is located at the bottom of your zoom screen.

00:58:56.190 --> 00:59:10.080

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: I can then unmute you, and you can verbally ask your question and then a staff member will respond your question again. You may need to wave your mouse back and forth across the bottom of your zoom screen in order to see that raise hand icon.

00:59:10.770 --> 00:59:19.620

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: I'll also go ahead and go through the instructions for our phone callers because I do see that we have quite a few phone callers today.

00:59:19.950 --> 00:59:24.120

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: So if you are calling in through your phone and you would like to ask a question today,

00:59:24.630 --> 00:59:32.520

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Please press star nine on your keypad to access that raise hand feature to let staff know that you have a question.

00:59:32.820 --> 00:59:47.820

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: And then it will be the same process. I will unmute you. You can verbally ask your question and then a staff member will verbally respond to your question aloud. We'll give everyone here a few more minutes to see if they have another question they would like to ask.

00:59:52.170 --> 01:00:04.200

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Great. And let's see, it looks like Jordan might have a follow up. So I'll go to Jordan first and then looks like we have Brandon Walter next. So, Brandon. I'll get to you after we circle back with Jordan quickly.

01:00:06.960 --> 01:00:14.160

Jordan Smith: Thank you, Paul, this might be another question for you. So with the post delisting monitoring,

01:00:15.120 --> 01:00:28.410

Jordan Smith: It says in there something about a range wide decline. If there is one after the five years, there may be an additional two years of monitoring, and so I was wondering when you talked about the meta populations and the importance of each of those

01:00:29.730 --> 01:00:44.910

Jordan Smith: If, let's just say one of these meta populations dropped significantly but the other meta populations are doing well or at least maintaining, would that warrant a situation where we would need to look into things further?

01:00:46.530 --> 01:00:50.760

Jordan Smith: Or is it just the cumulative impact as the population as a whole?

01:00:52.500 --> 01:01:00.090

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: Um, no. A single population might not want it, but then again it might. That's why we have to look at it holistically

01:01:00.930 --> 01:01:11.190

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: from all perspectives and all subpopulations, which takes, is quite an accomplishment, when you consider all the entities involved in monitoring, but that's what's got to be done.

01:01:11.610 --> 01:01:20.730

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: One of the problems that we've had is in some portions of the range, a great deal of money has been invested on monitoring and habitat management.

01:01:21.180 --> 01:01:37.050

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: And we see little response of the bird. There is response to monitoring and management, but it might not be what we expect. And then when habitats reset by major cyclic weather events,

01:01:37.680 --> 01:01:48.030

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: We see huge responses in the birds. So if we just look at the population alone within a subpopulation, the number of birds within a subpopulation is the best way to explain it,

01:01:49.590 --> 01:02:00.330

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: That may or may not be significant because these birds live a long time. They live up to over 20 years, probably a 10-to-15-year lifespan is the norm.

01:02:00.990 --> 01:02:10.320

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: So they don't die when things are bad. And when populations generally, they move somewhere else, and that's why you have to look at the

01:02:10.680 --> 01:02:19.140

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: Whole meta population. So you get small populations that may be, may wink on and off some years, and may be very important. They may have large

01:02:19.410 --> 01:02:27.900

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: Recruitment rates because the birds have just moved in and there's a little predation, and then other years, they may fail miserably in recruitment.

01:02:28.290 --> 01:02:38.010

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: Because of the predators have keyed in on them when they just simply go somewhere else. That's why you have to look at it across the range. Did that answer your question, Jordan?

01:02:42.990 --> 01:03:01.680

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: I put Jordan back on mute. So we can follow up with him later if needed. For now we'll go ahead and move on to Brandon

Walter and then I see two additional hands raised. Let's see. Chantel and Allisyn. So we'll go to you after we get to Brandon. So right now, Brandon, I'll go ahead and

01:03:05.040 --> 01:03:06.300

Brandon Walter: Hello, can you all hear me?

01:03:06.870 --> 01:03:07.620

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Yes, we can.

01:03:08.040 --> 01:03:19.920

Brandon Walter: Okay, yeah, this is Brandon Walter. I'm the state biologist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service in South Dakota here. I do appreciate the opportunity to sit in and listen on this. This is quite an accomplishment.

01:03:20.940 --> 01:03:25.680

Brandon Walter: I guess. And maybe this is more of a local question. But I thought I'd use this platform to ask it anyway. But

01:03:26.310 --> 01:03:45.180

Brandon Walter: Here in South Dakota, we have a programmatic agreement with the Fish and Wildlife Service on conservation efforts that the NRCS does with, you know, private landowners. It's all voluntary and then we have, you know, conditions for implementing certain practices and within the tern's

01:03:46.260 --> 01:03:49.350

Brandon Walter: Habitat zones. What is allowed and what is not.

01:03:50.610 --> 01:03:53.730

Brandon Walter: I guess my question is, is with the delisting of this species,

01:03:55.200 --> 01:04:02.910

Brandon Walter: I would assume we still need to abide by some of these local restrictions and timeframes of when we are implementing practices but

01:04:03.330 --> 01:04:16.620

Brandon Walter: I'd like to get your guys's input. Is that something that is that we're legally bound to continue to do, or is this something that we can potentially go a different route or is that more of a localized question? Thank you.

01:04:19.680 --> 01:04:25.890

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Thank you, Brandon. I'll go ahead and put you back on mute and lower your hand and a staff member will respond to your question.

01:04:27.510 --> 01:04:41.040

USFWS - Kristi Young: Bread and this is a Kristi Young with Fish and Wildlife Service and if Paul doesn't have a direct answer for you, you know, that is kind of a specific local issue, but we'll, we'll make sure that you're connected with somebody in the local area that can answer your question.

01:04:45.720 --> 01:04:48.510

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: Yeah, and I like to jump in and say, we would like you to continue

01:04:50.040 --> 01:04:53.550

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: Management that you've been doing. If you can do it under

01:04:58.470 --> 01:04:59.880

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: Under your state laws.

01:05:01.080 --> 01:05:08.070

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: Anything you want to do is fine. This, a lot of it is up to you and will be up to you. And it'll be on a case-by-case basis.

01:05:08.490 --> 01:05:16.830

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: The big thing that everybody needs to recognize is when you the list of species, you don't just simply walk away. You've been doing things over the past

01:05:17.310 --> 01:05:24.750

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: few decades that you should probably keep doing to maintain those species or to maintain this particular species.

01:05:25.230 --> 01:05:34.410

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: And we'd like you to continue to do those things that are necessary to keep the subpopulations viable within your area. If you see declines,

01:05:34.830 --> 01:05:38.790

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: You know, we need to know about this. This is a part of the monitoring program,

01:05:39.510 --> 01:05:53.850

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: What kind of changes and management will occur and how will affect the tern. You may see little response by the tern in changes and management, and others, you'll see great changes and response. So that's the kind of thing we have to figure out going forward.

01:05:57.540 --> 01:06:07.800

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Great. Thank you, Paul and Kristi for those responses. We'll go ahead and move on to our next raised hand, who is Chantel, so I'll go ahead and unmute you.

01:06:11.730 --> 01:06:14.430

Chantel Hofer: Hi I'm Chantel Hofer for with the Corps of Engineer.

01:06:15.570 --> 01:06:26.700

Chantel Hofer: I'm sorry if I missed this earlier, but can you tell me what is the effective date of the delisting? Are there additional steps needed to finalize this the delisting?

01:06:29.760 --> 01:06:37.470

USFWS - Kristi Young: This is a, yeah, this is Kristi Young again, and the effective date will be February 12th. So a month from today.

01:06:41.490 --> 01:06:47.220

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Great, thank you Kristi for that response. We'll go ahead and move on to our next raised hand. Again,

01:06:47.580 --> 01:06:57.660

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: This is just the Q&A portion. So we are welcoming questions on the final delisting. Again if you have a question, and you're using the zoom web platform or zoom app,

01:06:57.990 --> 01:07:12.240

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Please click on the raise hand icon located at the bottom of your zoom screen or, if you're calling in through the phone today and you have a question, please press star nine on your keypad to access that raise hand feature.

01:07:12.960 --> 01:07:18.690

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: For now we'll go ahead to our one raised hand and that is Allison. So I'll go ahead and unmute you.

01:07:20.850 --> 01:07:28.410

Allisyn Gillet: Hi, can you hear me? Hi, this is Allisyn Gillet with the Indiana DNR. I'm the state ornithologist.

01:07:29.430 --> 01:07:31.710

Allisyn Gillet: I just had a, likely a question for Paul

01:07:32.850 --> 01:07:40.530

Allisyn Gillet: So you mentioned that least terns will live for, they are a long-lived species, and they likely live for sometimes 20 years.

01:07:41.280 --> 01:07:56.790

Allisyn Gillet: But the post delisting monitoring requirements are only for five years. So how is five years able to kind of be able to observe any sort of significant population trends for species that is a long-lived species?

01:07:58.590 --> 01:07:58.980

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: Yeah.

01:08:00.510 --> 01:08:01.320

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: This is,

01:08:04.170 --> 01:08:12.180

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: We're going to continue to meet with our state partners to try to figure out how we want to deal with this. What we've got though Allisyn is a

01:08:13.530 --> 01:08:21.180

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: You know, a 40-to-50-year record of steady increase of terns across the range. It seems to have plateaued right now.

01:08:22.920 --> 01:08:25.980

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: So, you know, if you, if you consider that entire

01:08:27.570 --> 01:08:32.370

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: Database. We've been monitoring this bird for multiple decades and seeing nothing but increases.

01:08:32.850 --> 01:08:42.060

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: We have no real identifiable threats right now. I mean, obviously there's local threats to individual birds, individual colonies.

01:08:42.540 --> 01:08:54.930

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: But those are indeed localized or not range wide so within five years, we should be able to detect whether or not that trend is increasing or decreasing. And as I've said, the Army Corps has built

01:08:55.800 --> 01:09:06.030

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: A lot of this monitoring, a lot of management directly into their programs now, which are expected to continue, not for five years, but for 40 or 50 years possibly.

01:09:06.540 --> 01:09:13.200

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: So we're looking toward this on a long-term view. But we're also using the past as a

01:09:14.100 --> 01:09:20.640

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: Window into what's going on, as you know, our funds are extremely limited for monitoring, particularly for monitoring

01:09:21.000 --> 01:09:34.710

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: Post delisting. So this is simply a way to get a credible monitoring plan, a building upon the huge investment that we've

already made. And then, of course, relying on the Corps commitments over the long-term

01:09:35.790 --> 01:09:48.450

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: Following that time. As well, each state has the ability to alert us after five years, after 10 years, or after 15 years, if they see significant declines. So I think

01:09:49.860 --> 01:09:57.060

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: We can do this; we may want to do it for longer and we'll work with the States to determine whether or not that's the case.

01:09:59.790 --> 01:10:09.360

USFWS - Kristi Young: This is Kristi again. And if I could add that, you know, we did propose a draft post delisting monitoring plan when we proposed the delisting of the species.

01:10:09.960 --> 01:10:20.130

USFWS - Kristi Young: But the comments that we did receive on the five-year plan focused on that limited duration that you mentioned. And so we did not finalize the plan with the,

01:10:21.060 --> 01:10:26.490

USFWS - Kristi Young: With the finalization of the delisting that is a published tomorrow.

01:10:27.000 --> 01:10:36.240

USFWS - Kristi Young: But we will continue to work with the states to address the concerns that were expressed in the comments. And we do really consider the five years to be the minimum,

01:10:36.930 --> 01:10:46.440

USFWS - Kristi Young: And we encourage and support any monitoring just as Paul says above and beyond that it is needed to meet all the local demands and any management commitments.

01:10:51.300 --> 01:11:06.420

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Great, thank you Kristi and Paul for those responses. I'm gonna go ahead and check one last time. I'm not seeing any new hands. Oh, and I just saw a raised hand from Paul. So I'll go ahead and unmute Paul, so he can ask this question.

01:11:20.370 --> 01:11:26.760

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Ok, I've unmuted you from my end, Paul. Let's see. You might need to unmute yourself from your end. There we go.

01:11:27.420 --> 01:11:38.550

Paul Lepisto: Sorry about that. Paul Lepisto with the Izaak Walton League of America on that last point that was just mentioned, will that five-year monitoring plan be finalized as part of this delisting process?

01:11:40.980 --> 01:11:42.750

USFWS - Kristi Young: So it is. Yep.

01:11:44.460 --> 01:11:45.360

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: You could, you do it.

01:11:47.670 --> 01:11:56.280

USFWS - Kristi Young: So no, we did not finalize the plan with this delisting but we're going to continue to work with partners. And when we do finalize it will post it online.

01:12:02.820 --> 01:12:08.910

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Great, thank you Kristi for that response. Again, we'll wait a few more minutes here and see if anybody has

01:12:09.300 --> 01:12:18.750

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Any raised hands. Again, you can see the instructions on the screen or press star nine on your keypad to raise your hand if you're calling in through the phone.

01:12:19.200 --> 01:12:27.240

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: If we don't see any more raised hands, we'll go to our final slide and have Regional Director Miranda provide some closing remarks for us today.

01:12:34.200 --> 01:12:39.210

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: And it looks like Allisyn has a follow up question perhaps. I'll go ahead and unmute her.

01:12:41.880 --> 01:12:43.200

Allisyn Gillet: Again, I'm,

01:12:44.280 --> 01:12:47.700

Allisyn Gillet: Just a question again about the post delisting monitoring plan.

01:12:49.770 --> 01:12:58.050

Allisyn Gillet: Is it specifically legally required to do this under, when a species is delisted?

01:12:59.490 --> 01:13:08.460

Allisyn Gillet: What is specifically the process that is required for when a species is listed and how to determine whether they

01:13:09.810 --> 01:13:14.190

Allisyn Gillet: Will require any sort of intervention after delisting?

01:13:19.440 --> 01:13:20.640

USFWS - Kristi Young: Paul do you want to take that one?

01:13:21.720 --> 01:13:22.410

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: Yeah, I can.

01:13:24.420 --> 01:13:35.400

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: The process, legally what we're required to do, is to work with the States to develop a monitoring program. And that's as far as it goes. We don't have to have an actual written plan.

01:13:36.660 --> 01:13:44.520

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: We like to have a plan, but we don't have to have one. We try to have one. Our policy says that we will have one - that's policy in the law.

01:13:46.560 --> 01:13:47.190

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: The,

01:13:48.510 --> 01:13:59.070

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: Specifically, the law states that we, it has to be for a minimum of five years, it can be longer based upon the biology and of the species in the circumstances.

01:14:00.180 --> 01:14:13.140

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: So, but at least five years, states should have the ability to continue to monitor the species using Section 6 funds if they don't have other avenues. But again, they're not

01:14:14.460 --> 01:14:20.940

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: legally required to use their Section 6 funds, specifically for monitoring delisted species. So that'll be up to them.

01:14:21.570 --> 01:14:42.300

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: The, once delisted, the requirements for relisting are essentially the same for any candidate species. You would have to make the case, you'd have to show the threats involved to the species and go through the listing process once again. Does that answer your question, Allisyn?

01:14:45.870 --> 01:14:47.490

USFWS - Paul Hartfield: I'm sorry if you're, you guys are muted.

01:14:48.510 --> 01:14:56.670

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: I put her back on mute. But again, if anybody has any follow up to any question that they asked previously, or if you have a new question you would like to ask,

01:14:57.060 --> 01:15:07.920

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Please go ahead and access that raise hand feature. Again we'll give folks just a few more minutes here to see if they have any questions, and then we will pitch back to Regional Director Miranda.

01:15:37.980 --> 01:15:46.800

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: I don't see any additional raised hands. So at this time, I'm going to go ahead and move to our last slide, and I will

01:15:47.940 --> 01:15:52.920

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Go ahead and unmute Regional Director Miranda to close us out here.

01:15:58.920 --> 01:15:59.970

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: Thank you so much

01:16:01.350 --> 01:16:08.310

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: Amanda. And thank you so much everybody that joined us today for today's great

01:16:09.330 --> 01:16:10.650

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: Conservation achievement.

01:16:12.330 --> 01:16:18.030

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: I would like to say that again that we need to celebrate things like this.

01:16:19.320 --> 01:16:29.070

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: Every single bit of conservation that we can get on the ground is important, not, not, not only for the species, but also for the entire ecosystem,

01:16:29.460 --> 01:16:40.890

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: Ecosystem that sustain these species. So by recovering the interior least tern, we're not only recovering one species, but many other species that depend on those same ecosystems.

01:16:41.430 --> 01:16:51.930

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: That had been managed and conserved for the interior least tern. So again, thank you for, for your time today. Great questions.

01:16:53.520 --> 01:17:03.120

USFWS - Leopoldo Miranda: And let's keep implementing really good conservation across the entire landscape by working together with all of our partners. Thank you. Appreciate it.