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Brown Pelican Populations Recovered, Removed from Endangered Species List

Salazar: Brown Pelican Recovery is “an Amazing Success Story”

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks Tom Strickland and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Sam Hamilton today announced that the brown pelican, a species once decimated by the pesticide DDT, has recovered and is being removed from the list of threatened and endangered species under the Endangered Species Act.

“At a time when so many species of wildlife are threatened, we once in a while have an opportunity to celebrate an amazing success story,” Salazar said. “Today is such a day. The brown pelican is back!”

The brown pelican was first declared endangered in 1970 under the Endangered Species Preservation Act, a precursor to the current Endangered Species Act. Since then, thanks to a ban on DDT and efforts by states, conservation organizations, private citizens and many other partners, the bird has recovered. There are now more than 650,000 brown pelicans found across Florida and the Gulf and Pacific Coasts, as well as in the Caribbean and Latin America.

The Fish and Wildlife Service removed the brown pelican population in Alabama, Georgia, Florida, and northward along the Atlantic Coast states from the list of endangered species in 1985. Today’s action removes the remaining population from the list.

“After being hunted for its feathers, facing devastating effects from the pesticide DDT and suffering from widespread coastal habitat loss, the pelican has made a remarkable

recovery,' Strickland said at a press conference in New Orleans to announce the delisting. "We once again see healthy flocks of pelicans in the air over our shores."

The pelican's recovery is largely due to the federal ban on the general use of the pesticide DDT in 1972. This action was taken after former U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring* and alerted the nation to the widespread dangers associated with unrestricted pesticide use.

Hamilton praised the Gulf and Pacific Coast states for their constant efforts to restore this iconic coastal species. "Brown pelicans could not have recovered without a strong and continuing support network of partnerships among federal and state government agencies, tribes, conservation organizations, and individual citizens," said Hamilton. "This is truly a success story that the whole nation can celebrate."

In the southwest, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, The Nature Conservancy and numerous other conservation organizations helped purchase important nesting sites and developed monitoring programs to ensure pelican rookeries were thriving.

Louisiana, long known as the "pelican state," and the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission jointly implemented a restoration project. A total of 1,276 young pelicans were captured in Florida and released at three sites in southeastern Louisiana during the 13 years of the project.

Past efforts to protect the brown pelican actually led to the birth of the National Wildlife Refuge System more than a century ago in central Florida. German immigrant Paul Kroegel, appalled by the indiscriminate slaughter of pelicans for their feathers, approached President Theodore Roosevelt. This led Roosevelt to create the first National Wildlife Refuge at Pelican Island in 1903, when Kroegel was named the first refuge manager. Today, the system has grown to 550 national wildlife refuges, many of which have played key roles in the recovery of the brown pelican.

With removal of the brown pelican from the list of threatened and endangered species, federal agencies will no longer be required to consult with the Service to ensure any action they authorize, fund, or carry out will not harm the species. However, additional federal laws, such as the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Lacey Act, will continue to protect the brown pelican, its nests and its eggs.

The Service has developed a Post-Delisting Monitoring Plan, designed to monitor and verify that the recovered, delisted population remains secure from the risk of extinction once the protections of the ESA are removed. The Service can relist the brown pelican if future monitoring or other information shows it is necessary to prevent a significant risk to the brown pelican.

The monitoring will be done in cooperation with the State resource agencies, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, Mexico, other federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, and individuals. Further, the Service is working with state

natural resource agencies where the brown pelican occurs to develop cooperative management agreements to ensure that the species continues to be monitored.

The final rule removing the bird from the list of threatened and endangered species will be published in the Federal Register and will take effect 30 days after publication.