US FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Western Washington Fish and Wildlife Office

CONSERVATION AND HYDROPOWER PLANNING DIVISION
Habitat Conservation Planning Branch

Background

The Division of Conservation and Hydropower Planning works with non-federal land owners conserving fish and wildlife resources under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) through long term agreements called *Habitat Conservation Plans*. We also conserve species and their habitats through our work with utilities in the licensing or re-licensing of hydropower projects.

Habitat Conservation Planning

Habitat conservation planning is guided under Section 10 of the ESA. This provision allows the non-federal land owner to voluntarily initiate and develop a plan that meets their unique management needs while providing for at-risk species conservation. The purpose of a Habitat Conservation Plan is to ensure that the effects of any harm that might occur to the species or its habitat while the landowner is performing normal activities are minimized or alleviated through additional habitat or other restorative measure.

HCPs address riparian area management (USFWS,Gene Stagner)

Who We Are

We are a team of fish and wildlife biologists who have interdisciplinary knowledge about conservation biology, landscape ecology, watershed processes, habitat and species relationships, and threatened and endangered species ecology. We work with diverse stakeholders in a collaborative approach to find solutions to ESA land management issues.

Who We serve

- The Public
- Small forest and industrial timber landowners
- Other private industry
- State land managers
- City and county water resource management entities
- Utilities
- Tribes
- Non-governmental organizations
- Other federal, state or local agencies

What We Do

Our Habitat Conservation Planning staff is responsible for helping non-Federal entities develop conservation plans under section 10 of the ESA to conserve and protect threatened and endangered species. Our earliest HCPs targeted forest management activities and species associated with forested ecosystems.

Conservation strategies for the northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet were emphasized in these HCPs, although many other forest-dependent species were included.

More recently, we completed water supply HCPs for the two largest cities in western Washington. These HCPs provide for protection of instream flows for fish and the cities receive the certainty that they will have adequate water supplies for the future. As with forest HCPs, we are committed to ensuring these HCPs are implemented to achieve their goals of long-term conservation for aquatic and terrestrial resources.

We are presently collaborating with the State of Washington on the development of three HCPs:

- The Washington Department of Natural Resources Aquatic Resources Division is working with us on an HCP for aquatic lands to promote sustainable ecosystems, minimize cumulative impacts, and increase conservation and recovery for listed species.

- The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife is working with us on two HCPs for different sets of activities: one for its Hydraulic Code and the other for lands managed for wildlife conservation purposes. All of these HCPs have the potential to contribute to healthier ecosystems and benefit ESA listed species.

As Washington's population continues to grow, our office is ready to coordinate with landowners on habitat issues and activities as they evolve. Commercial and residential developments, emerging energy technologies, agricultural practices, and currently unknown projects and technologies that could harm endangered species are candidates for future HCPs in western Washington.

Recent Projects and Accomplishment

- In 2006 we completed the Forest Practices HCP. This HCP covers approximately 9.3 million acres of non-federal and non-tribal forestlands in Washington and includes conservation measures for most Washington native fish species, including bull trout, and seven stream-associated amphibian species. The HCP provides conservation measures for riparian areas, road construction and maintenance, and unstable slopes.

Timber harvest practices associated with HCPs encourage leaving trees scattered and in patches throughout harvest units. Many of these trees will eventually provide large, dominant green trees and snags that are important for many forest- dwelling species.(Richard Bigley, Washington Department of Natural Resources)

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