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News Release



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Secretary Salazar Announces Nearly \$66 Million in Grants to Conserve Habitat of Threatened and Endangered Species

Washington to Receive \$16.2 Million

WASHINGTON – Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar today announced nearly \$66 million in grants to enable 25 states to work with private landowners, conservation organizations and other partners to protect and conserve the habitat of threatened and endangered species.

The grants, awarded through the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund, will benefit numerous species nationwide, ranging from the desert tortoise to the Indiana bat.

In Washington state partners will receive over \$16.2 million in grants benefiting dozens of species statewide through planning and conservation acquisitions. Funded projects include:

Mt. St. Helen's Forest (Skamania County, WA) \$6,000,000. Columbia Land Trust, as a subgrantee, will acquire approximately 3,000 acres in the Pine Creek watershed within the Mt. St. Helens Forest to permanently protect the highest priority lands that will most benefit three federally listed species: bull trout, northern spotted owl, and gray wolf. The acquisition of the property will contribute significantly to habitat connectivity in the southern Cascade Mountain Range.

Methow Watershed, Phase 7 (Okanogan County, WA) \$4,500,000. The Methow, Phase 7 project will secure 3,025 acres and additional stream frontage protecting critical wolf habitat, spawning and rearing habitat for listed salmonids, landscape corridors for ESA-listed carnivores and their mule deer prey, and habitat for at least 23 at-risk species covered by the Plum Creek HCP. The Methow River Watershed is perhaps the most intact and ecologically functional major drainage in eastern Washington, supporting a unique and diverse assemblage of fish and wildlife species. Nationally, it is one of the few places where endangered and threatened grizzly bears, gray wolves, lynx, bull trout, and salmon occur together and is the home of Washington's first documented wolf pack in over 30 years.

Okanogan-Similkameen Watershed, Phase 3 (Okanogan County, WA) \$1,500,000. Phase 3 of the Okanogan-Similkameen project will acquire 1,370 acres which will contribute toward securing two ecologically critical animal movement corridors, one for wide-ranging carnivores and their ungulate prey that links the North Cascades Ecosystem with the Kettle/Selkirk Mountains Ecosystem, and the other linking the

shrub-steppe habitat of the Columbia Basin with the grassland/shrub-steppe habitat of southern British Columbia. The project will conserve habitat for at least 48 species listed as threatened or endangered (5 Federal, 8 State, and 35 Canadian). The project has the added benefit of supporting local economies by encouraging ecologically sustainable land use and maintaining working ranch landscapes.

Mt. Si Inholdings (King County, WA) \$1,200,000. This project will protect 520 acres of old growth forest in eastern King County in Washington State through acquisition of a 42-acre inholding within the State's Mt. Si Natural Resource Conservation Area. The Department of Natural Resources will provide 478 acres as match for the acquisition. Protection of this land will provide vital landscape connections that will enhance adjacent protected areas and increase habitat protection for marbled murrelets and northern spotted owls.

Puyallup River Levee Setback (Pierce County, WA) \$271,700. Pierce County, as a subgrantee to the Department of Natural Resources will acquire three parcels owned by a single landowner along the Puyallup River. This acquisition will allow the County to complete the acquisition phase of the Puyallup River Levee Setback Project at the South Fork project site, which will reconnect about 50 acres of aquatic and riparian habitat with the Puyallup River. The project will provide benefit to multiple endangered and threatened fish species, including bull trout, and will provide public benefit through improved flood hazard management through the restoration of historic floodplain habitat.

Golden Paintbrush at Heritage Preserve (Island County, WA) \$1,258,500. This funding will enable the Whidbey Camano Land Trust, as a subgrantee to Washington Department of Natural Resources, to protect one of the 12 remaining federally threatened and state endangered golden paintbrush (*Castilleja levisecta*) populations still existing in the world. This rare prairie plant population on Whidbey Island is part of a 59-acre protection project that includes a unique coastal old-growth forest, important eroding shoreline bluff and crucial wildlife habitat. The Land Trust will manage the golden paintbrush site to protect, augment, and restore the population.

Washington State Hydraulic Project Approval HCP (Statewide) \$753,553. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) will enter its sixth and final year of habitat conservation planning for activities authorized under the state's primary fish-protection law, the Hydraulic Project Approval (HPA) authority. WDFW will complete an HCP to conserve fish and shellfish species while achieving long-term certainty that HPA activities meet federal species protection requirements. The HCP planning process includes substantial public involvement. ESA-listed species that will benefit include bull trout; steelhead; and Chinook, Coho, and sockeye salmon. Unlisted species include but are not limited to: coastal cutthroat trout; green sturgeon; Pacific, river, and western brook lamprey; California floater mussel; and giant Columbia River limpet.

Aquatic Resources HCP (Statewide) \$330,000. Washington Department of Natural Resources is entering the final year of a planning process to develop a multi-species, programmatic Habitat Conservation Plan. The HCP will ensure that authorized activities on 2.6 million acres of state-owned aquatic lands in marine, estuarine, and freshwater environments promote sustainable ecosystems, minimize cumulative impacts, and increase protection, conservation, and recovery efforts for 30 species of fish and wildlife.

Wildlife Areas HCP (Statewide) \$481,637. This grant allows the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to finalize the development of an HCP for its land management program on more than 900,000 acres across the state. The HCP will offer benefits to more than 50 ESA-listed and at-risk species and land users by providing certainty that land management activities meet Federal species protection requirements. Listed species that will benefit include but are not limited to: pygmy rabbit, woodland caribou, western

snowy plover, northern spotted owl, marbled murrelet, bull trout, Chinook salmon, steelhead, Oregon silverspot, golden paintbrush, and Kincaid's lupine. Unlisted species include greater sage-grouse, northern goshawk, burrowing owl, Oregon spotted frog, Larch Mountain salamander, coho salmon, Mardon skipper, Taylor's checkerspot, and giant Columbia River limpet.

"These grants are part of our ongoing commitment to work with states and other partners to ensure America's beautiful land and wildlife are conserved for future generations," Salazar said. "They provide the means for states to develop the long-term partnerships with landowners and communities necessary to conserve habitat and foster stewardship that will bring species back from the threat of extinction."

Authorized by Section 6 of the Endangered Species Act, the competitive grants enable states to work with private landowners, conservation groups and other agencies to initiate conservation planning efforts and acquire and protect habitat to support the conservation of threatened and endangered species.

This year, the Cooperative Endangered Species Fund provides approximately \$10 million through the Habitat Conservation Planning Assistance Grants Program, \$41 million through the Habitat Conservation Plan Land Acquisition Grants Program, and \$15 million through the Recovery Land Acquisition Grants Program. The three programs were established to help avoid potential conflicts between the conservation of threatened and endangered species and land development and use.

Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs) are agreements between a landowner and the Service. These agreements allow a landowner to undertake otherwise lawful activities on their property, even if they may result in the death, injury or harassment of a listed species, when that landowner agrees to conservation measures designed to minimize and mitigate the impact of those actions. HCPs may also be developed by a county or state to cover certain activities of all landowners within their jurisdiction and may address multiple species.

Under the HCP Land Acquisition Grants Program, the Service provides grants to states or territories for land acquisition that complements the conservation objectives of approved HCPs. The HCP Planning Assistance Grants Program provides grants to states and territories to support the development of HCPs through funding of baseline surveys and inventories, document preparation, outreach and similar planning activities.

The Recovery Land Acquisition Grants Program provides funds to states and territories to acquire habitat for endangered and threatened species with approved recovery plans. Habitat acquisition to secure long term protection is often an essential element of a comprehensive recovery effort for a listed species.

For a complete national list of the 2010 grant awards for these programs (Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number 15.615), see the Service's Endangered Species Grants home page at <http://endangered.fws.gov/grants/section6/index.html>.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov.

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