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# Stakeholders Assist Species Recovery in the Southwest

*R*estoring our nation's rare plant and animal resources to a secure status is a task much too large for any single agency. To assist us in this effort, the Fish and Wildlife Service has adopted a policy of involving stakeholders—local jurisdictions, private organizations, land owners, and other affected individuals—in as many recovery programs as possible. This approach not only makes recovery a more achievable goal but also gives stakeholders more of a voice in determining how recovery plans are developed and implemented. The Southwest Region's Recovery Program benefits greatly from cooperative stakeholder involvement, as these examples illustrate.

*Southwestern willow flycatcher*

*Photo by S. & D. Maslowski*



### **Southwestern Willow Flycatcher**

The recovery program for the endangered southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*) is one of the nation's largest and most comprehensive bird restoration efforts. One of four currently-recognized willow flycatcher subspecies, the southwestern willow flycatcher is a neotropical migratory bird that breeds in the southwestern United States and migrates to Mexico, Central America, and northern South America during the non-breeding season. The primary reason for the bird's decline is widespread loss of riparian habitat throughout the southwestern U.S.

Thirteen scientists appointed to the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher Recovery Team as a Technical Subgroup provide specialized biological information needed for the restoration program. Additionally, seven Implementation Subgroups have been appointed to guide the recovery effort as it is carried out in U.S. regions of the bird's geographic range. These regional groups consist of more than 300 community representatives of ranchers, environmental organizations, water and power interests, state and federal land managers, local governments, tribes, and private industry. Meetings between the Technical and Implementation subgroups have been useful in educating participants about the bird's status, identifying specific threats within different watersheds, and recognizing the various recovery activities.

To help the Technical Subgroup better understand Native American perspectives on the recovery of the flycatcher and to promote tribal participation in the recovery effort, a Tribal Working Group has been organized. Representatives from the Zuni Pueblo, Santa Ana Pueblo, Southern Ute, Northern Pueblo Association, White Mountain Apache, San Carlos Apache, Hopi, Hualapai, Cocopah, Salt River-Pima Maricopa, and the Colorado River Indian Tribes are actively helping the Technical Subgroup draft a portion of

the recovery plan that addresses Native American issues.

### **Rio Grande Silvery Minnow**

The Rio Grande silvery minnow (*Hybognathus amarus*) was listed in 1994 as endangered because of extensive habitat loss due to water diversions. Historically, this fish was found in the Rio Grande from Española, New Mexico, to the Gulf of Mexico, as well as in the Pecos River in eastern New Mexico. The Rio Grande Silvery Minnow Recovery Team has involved stakeholders in the development of the recovery plan in order to minimize social and economic impacts. Members of the Recovery Team include individuals from the New Mexico Water Resource Research Institute, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, City of Albuquerque, University of Texas, University of New Mexico, Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District, and others. Having these participants on the Recovery Team is particularly important; in order for recovery to succeed, the interests of Rio Grande water users and the biological needs of the Rio Grande silvery minnow must be represented and clearly understood.

### **Cactus Ferruginous Pygmy-owl**

The cactus ferruginous pygmy-owl (*Glaucidium brasilianum cactorum*) was listed as endangered in 1997. Like the flycatcher team, the Cactus Ferruginous Pygmy-owl Recovery Team consists of a Technical Group (scientists from agencies and academia) and an Implementation Group. The 26 members of the Implementation Group represent several counties within southern Arizona, environmental organizations, State and local governments, and various corporations and interest groups (e.g., Southern Arizona Cattle Association, private property rights advocates, Phelps Dodge). Further, several members of the Implementation Group also participate on the Steering Committee for the Sonoran

Desert Conservation Plan, a multi-species conservation plan under development that originated with an effort to save the pygmy-owl while accommodating other uses as much as possible. The plan is being expanded to address as many as 80 other vulnerable species native to southern Arizona.

### **Mexican Spotted Owl**

The recovery plan for the threatened Mexican spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis lucida*) was published in 1995. It makes a series of management recommendations and calls for monitoring both the population and its habitat. Implementation Working Teams established for various recovery units have tackled such controversial issues as fire management, urbanization, and forestry practices. Because the teams are composed of a diverse membership, ideas from varying viewpoints are discussed and local interested parties are able to participate in recovery plan implementation.

The Fish and Wildlife Service views these teams as an innovative and positive approach towards involving stakeholders in recovery processes. We will continue to involve stakeholders in future recovery processes to promote creative solutions for the recovery of endangered plants and animals.

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