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News Release



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SECRETARY KEMPTHORNE ANNOUNCES \$57.9 MILLION IN GRANTS TO SUPPORT LAND ACQUISITION AND CONSERVATION PLANNING FOR ENDANGERED SPECIES

More than \$12 million awarded to projects in the Pacific Region

Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne today announced more than \$57.9 million in grants to 23 states and one territory -- including \$12.3 million to states in the Pacific Region -- to support conservation planning and acquisition of vital habitat for threatened and endangered fish, wildlife and plants. The grants, awarded through the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund, will benefit numerous species ranging in the Pacific Region from the northern spotted owl to the Hawaiian stilt. Nationally, the species that will benefit range from the red-cockaded woodpecker to the Lake Erie watersnake.

“These grants build long-term partnerships with landowners who help to conserve our nation’s imperiled species,” said Secretary Kempthorne. “They are important tools that empower landowners and communities to safeguard habitat and foster conservation stewardship efforts for future generations.”

Authorized by Section 6 of the Endangered Species Act, the 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 \$8.6 million through the Habitat Conservation Planning Assistance Grants Program, \$35.3 million through the Habitat Conservation Plan Land Acquisition Grants Program and \$14 million through the Recovery Land Acquisition Grants Program, which includes approximately \$1.5 million of funds carried over from previous years or recovered from previous projects. 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, allowing a landowner to undertake otherwise lawful activities on their property that 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 own jurisdiction and may address multiple species. Nationwide, there are more than 675 HCPs currently in effect covering nearly 600 species on approximately 42 million acres.

Under the HCP Land Acquisition Program, the Service provides grants to states or territories for land acquisition associated with approved HCPs. The grants are targeted to help landowners who volunteer to conserve imperiled species on their lands. Among recipients of today's HCP Land Acquisition grants is the state of Washington, which is receiving two grants totaling \$7,087,781. A \$5 million grant will be used to acquire 6,200 acres of ecologically critical animal movement corridors for grizzly bears, gray wolves, Canada lynx and wolverines and their prey. A \$2,087,781 grant will be used to acquire riparian habitat in the Rock Creek drainage along the Naches River to benefit the northern spotted owl, bull trout, grizzly bears, gray wolves, Canada lynx and a number of unlisted species.

The HCP Planning Assistance 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. For example, the state of Oregon will receive \$306,000 to help Deschutes Basin water users and other stakeholders start work on a habitat conservation plan for the basin that, when completed, will provide ecosystem benefits to large areas of the upper basin, which includes the Metolius, Crooked and Deschutes river basins. The state of Washington is receiving two grants totaling \$1.3 million to finance continued planning for two statewide, multi-species HCPs.

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. One of this year's grants will provide \$1,471,500 to acquire a conservation easement over 654 acres of high-priority private forestland in the Kootenai Valley of northern Idaho. The property provides a critical link between the higher elevation public lands of the Selkirk Mountains and more than 2,000 acres of low-elevation protected areas owned by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Vital Ground Foundation and the Owens Foundation for Wildlife Conservation. The protection of this property will contribute to the recovery of grizzly bears, mountain caribou, bull trout, Canada lynx and the gray wolf. Under this same recovery acquisition program, the state of Hawaii is receiving three grants totaling \$2.1 million for land acquisitions on the islands of Oahu and Hawaii that will benefit nearly 100 species ranging from rare plants to endangered birds.

Details of the grants awarded today to states in the Fish and Wildlife Service's Pacific Region are below:

Habitat Conservation Plan Land Acquisition Grants by State:

Washington

Plum Creek HCP – Okanogan-Similkameen Watershed, Phase 1 (Okanogan County, WA) \$5,000,000. This project will secure approximately 6,200 acres of ecologically critical animal movement corridors for grizzly bear, gray wolf, Canada lynx, and wolverine and their ungulate prey. The corridors will link the North Cascades

Ecosystem with the Kettle/Selkirk Mountains Ecosystem as well as the grassland/shrub-steppe habitat of southern British Columbia with the shrub-steppe habitat of the Columbia Basin. The acquisition will provide benefits for at least 48 species listed by the State, Federal, or Canadian governments.

Plum Creek HCP – Heart of the Cascades, Phase I (Kittitas County, WA) \$2,087,781*. This project will conserve biodiversity at the landscape scale by conserving the checkerboard ownership pattern in the Central Cascades. This grant funding will acquire ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir mixed conifer, and riparian habitats in the Rock Creek drainage along the Naches River. Benefits are expected for the northern spotted owl, bull trout, grizzly bear, gray wolf, Canada lynx, and a number of unlisted species.

Habitat Conservation Planning Assistance Grants by State:

Oregon

Upper Deschutes Basin Habitat Conservation Plan (Jefferson, Crook, and Deschutes Counties, OR) \$306,000. This funding will assist the Deschutes Basin water users and other stakeholders in the initiation of an HCP that supports bull trout recovery and steelhead reintroduction above the Pelton Round Butte Hydro-electric Project. The HCP, when completed, will provide ecosystem benefits to large areas of the upper Deschutes River basin, which includes the Metolius, Crooked, and Deschutes River Basins.

Washington

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Wildlife Area HCP (Statewide, all 39 counties, WA) \$666,900. This grant funds the fourth year of an HCP process for the State's wildlife areas covering a total of approximately 830,000 acres. The HCP will offer benefits to protected 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, snowy plover, 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.

Washington State Hydraulic Project Approval HCP (Statewide, all 39 counties, WA) \$680,400. Funding is for the fourth year of the HCP process for the State's primary fish-protection regulatory program, the Hydraulic Project Approval (HPA) program. Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife seeks an HCP as a means of continuing conservation of fish and shellfish species and habitat, while achieving long-term certainty that the HPA program meets Federal species protection requirements. 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.

Recovery Land Acquisition Grants by State:

Hawai'i

Kawa Bay Acquisition (Hawaii County, HI) \$1,000,000. The objective of this acquisition is to acquire and permanently protect approximately 551 acres in the District of Ka'u along the southeast coast of the Island of Hawaii. The property provides approximately 2 miles of pristine coastline containing nesting beaches for the endangered Hawaiian hawksbill turtle and protecting offshore feeding areas for the threatened green sea turtle. The protection of this property would also benefit tidepools, coral reefs, an intertidal brackish water pond, and coastal freshwater springs which provide habitat for the endangered Hawaiian coot and the orange-black Hawaiian damselfly, a candidate species.

Hamakua Marsh Watershed Acquisition (Honolulu County, HI) \$740,000. The goal of the Hamakua Marsh Watershed acquisition project is to acquire and permanently protect 65 acres of wetland and watershed lands and add them to the existing Hamakua Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary administered by the Department of State Land and Natural Resources, Division of Forestry and Wildlife. This acquisition will enhance ongoing recovery efforts for endangered Hawaiian waterbirds and plant species in the Hamakua Marsh. Species benefited include Hawaiian stilt, Hawaiian coot, Hawaiian gallunule, Hawaiian duck, and the federally listed sedge – *Cyperus trachysanthos*.

Honouliuli Preserve Acquisition (Honolulu County, HI) \$361,196*. This funding will contribute toward the acquisition and permanent protection of the 3,582-acre Honouliuli property. The Department of Land and Natural Resources, Division of Forestry and Wildlife's acquisition of this area will permanently protect habitat for over 90 rare species, including 38 threatened and endangered plants, one endangered bird, one endangered pomace fly and two endangered tree snails. There are 15 species (four of them endangered) that can only be found on the Honouliuli parcel. The area represents the largest known population of 'elepaio in the Wai'ane Mountains and the second largest on the Island of O'ahu.

Idaho

Boundary Creek Conservation Easement (Boundary County, ID) \$1,471,500. This grant will support The Nature Conservancy's acquisition of a conservation easement over 654 acres of high-priority private forestland in the Kootenai Valley of northern Idaho. The subject property provides a critical link between the higher elevation public lands of the Selkirk Mountains Andover 2,000 acres of low-elevation protected areas owned by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Vital Ground Foundation, and the Owens Foundation for Wildlife Conservation. The protection of this property will contribute to the recovery of grizzly bear, mountain caribou, bull trout, Canada lynx, and gray wolf.

* Indicates partially funded projects.

For a complete list of the 2008 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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