

New Habitat Conservation Plan Grants

by Hugh Vickery



The golden-cheeked warbler is one of two listed songbirds in Texas that will benefit from the purchase of high quality habitat.

Photo by Maria Elena Tolle

A grant will help the state of Florida acquire habitat for the Choctawhatchee beach mouse and two listed sea turtle species.

Photo by Bryan Arroyo/USFWS



The Fish and Wildlife Service is providing \$68 million in grants to 10 states in Fiscal Year 2001 to help acquire vital habitat for threatened and endangered species ranging from loggerhead sea turtles (*Caretta caretta*) in Florida to two imperiled songbird species in Texas.

The funds, distributed as part of the Service's Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) Acquisition Program, will pay up to 75 percent of the cost of HCP land acquisitions in California, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, Montana, North Carolina, Texas, Utah, Washington, and Wisconsin. Non-federal partners are contributing at least 25 percent of the cost of each project.

Congress created the HCP Land Acquisition program in 1997 to complement the use of HCPs for reducing conflicts between the conservation of listed species and land development and use. Under the program, the

Service provides grants to states or territories for land acquisitions that are associated with approved HCPs. The lands acquired under the HCP Land Acquisition program are purchased only from willing sellers. They complement, but do not replace, the conservation responsibilities contained in an HCP.

An HCP is an agreement between a landowner and the Service that allows a landowner to incidentally take a listed species in the course of otherwise lawful activities when the landowner agrees to conservation measures that will mitigate and minimize the impact of the taking. Some large HCPs involve multiple species and an entire community. More than 300 HCPs covering approximately 20 million acres (8 million hectares) are already in effect, and more than 200 other HCPs are being developed.

This year's grants are:

California:

Multiple Species Conservation Plan (San Diego County): \$14,225,000 will be used to help acquire two key properties integral to the reserve design. The proposed acquisitions will protect the coastal California gnat-catcher (*Polioptila californica californica*) and at least 10 sensitive animal species and numerous sensitive plants. At least four listed vernal pool species also will benefit. The California Department of Fish and Game is providing matching funds.

Assessment District 161 Multiple Species Conservation Plan (Riverside County): \$10 million will help acquire several key parcels for the regional reserve design for both the approved AD 161 multi-species HCP and the

pending regional multi-species HCP. The acquisitions will add to the adjacent conservation areas and are essential to recovery of the Quino checkerspot butterfly (*Euphydryas editha quino*). The California Department of Fish and Game, Riverside County, and private citizens are providing matching funds.

Coachella Valley (Riverside County): \$2 million will be used to help acquire land to preserve the sand corridor and the sand source from Indio Hills to the Thousand Palms Preserve. Maintaining the sand source is crucial to the Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard (*Uma inornata*) and other endemic species. The California Department of Fish and Game is providing matching funds.

San Bruno Mountain HCP (San Mateo County): \$509,200 will help purchase Brisbane Acres, an area that provides 10 percent of the habitat for the callippe silverspot butterfly (*Speyeria callipe callipe*) on San Bruno Mountain. The City of Brisbane is providing matching funds.

Florida

Stallworth Preserve (Walton County): \$2,000,000 is allocated to help acquire undeveloped beachfront coastal dune habitat. The acquisition will benefit the Choctawhatchee beach mouse (*Peromyscus polionotus allopobry*), green sea turtle (*Chelonia mydas*), and loggerhead sea turtle. The State of Florida is providing the matching funds.

Georgia

Georgia Statewide Red-cockaded Woodpecker HCP (Appling County): \$400,000 will be used to purchase a 394-acres (160-ha) tract of land to link two conservation areas and buffer the Moody Tract mitigation site. This acquisition will benefit recovery efforts for the red-cockaded woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*). The Georgia Department of Natural Resources is providing the matching funds.

Maryland

Home Port HCP (Queen Anne's County): \$856,000 will be used to purchase conservation easements on two parcels to conserve Delmarva Peninsula fox squirrel (*Sciurus niger cinereus*) habitat and reduce ongoing fragmentation. The Maryland Environmental Trust is providing the matching funds.

Montana, Idaho, and Washington

Plum Creek Native Fish HCP: \$5,000,000 will be used to acquire a conservation easement on Plum Creek Timber Company riverfront and bench lands within the Thompson and Fisher River basins. This would protect approximately 7 miles (11 kilometers) of habitat for the bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*). The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks and private landowners are providing the matching funds.

North Carolina

Sandhills (Cumberland, Harnett, Hoke, Moore, Richmond, and Scotland counties): \$274,000 will help acquire an important parcel to conserve the longleaf pine ecosystem needed by the red-cockaded woodpecker. The North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission is providing the matching funds.

Texas

Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan (Travis County): \$14,362,500 will help purchase six priority parcels to protect high quality habitat for the golden-cheeked warbler (*Dendroica chrysoparia*) and the black-capped vireo (*Vireo atricapillus*). Travis County is providing the matching funds.

Houston Toad Lost Pines Ecosystem Conservation Initiative (Bastrop County): \$900,000 will be used to purchase land to protect the Lost Pines ecosystem, which contains unique bog and wetland habitats for many rare, endemic, and migratory species. The Lost Pines area of Bastrop County



Delmarva Peninsula fox squirrel
USFWS photo

contains the largest population of the Houston toad (*Bufo houstonensis*). Local private landowners are providing the matching funds.

Utah

Washington County (Washington County): \$6,063,750 will be used to purchase three identified acquisitions that are valuable habitat for the desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*). The Utah Department of Wildlife Resources, Washington County Water Conservation District, Washington County, and private organizations are providing the matching funds.

Washington

Washington State DNR (Pacific County): \$5,675,000 will be used to help purchase more than 900 acres (365 ha) of old-growth forest and portions of critical habitat for the marbled murrelet (*Brachyramphus marmoratus marmoratus*). The Washington State Department of Natural Resources is providing the matching funds.

Wisconsin

Wisconsin Statewide Karner Blue Butterfly HCP (Adams and Waushara counties): \$1,470,000 will help acquire three parcels to benefit recovery of the Karner blue butterfly (*Lycaeides melissa samuelis*). The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources is providing the matching funds.

Hugh Vickery is a Public Affairs Specialist in the Service's Washington, D.C., Office.