

Consultation and Habitat Conservation Planning around the Nation

Through the Consultation and Habitat Conservation Planning program the Service works with other Federal agencies to ensure that activities that they undertake or authorize are compatible with species' needs. The Service works with private landowners and other non-federal entities to develop Habitat Conservation Plans that authorize the incidental take of listed species.

Consulting With Federal Agencies

Wyoming: Streamlined Consultations with the Bureau of Land Management about Livestock Grazing

In Wyoming, the Service and the Bureau of Land Management joined in more than 500 high-priority informal consultations on livestock grazing permit renewals and transfers through a streamlined process featuring a series of "screens" for potential impacts to listed, proposed, and candidate species. This cooperative process enabled the Bureau to renew grazing permits before they expired, thereby preventing disruptions to ranchers' livestock operations.

Through these consultations, we were able to protect bald eagles using spatial buffers; conserve black-tailed prairie dog towns with benefits for black-footed ferrets and mountain plovers (species that depend on prairie dogs for prey and for habitat); recognize potential grizzly bear conflicts and adopt measures to avoid them; conduct surveys for Ute ladies'-tress orchids; and identify high elevation riparian areas for boreal toads. We were also able to locate mountain plover breeding areas and other suitable habitat. This information is facilitating development of new grazing plans.

Water Quality Consultations: Fish and Mussels as Indicators of the Health of our Rivers and Streams
With the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the State EPA, the Service is working to ensure that Ohio's newly revised antidegradation policy considers the needs of endangered mussels and other aquatic species while regulating the amount of pollution a permit holder is allowed to deposit into streams and rivers. Protecting endangered mussels contributes to keeping Ohio's drinking water clean and sport fish healthy to eat.

In Maine, the Service continues consultation with the Environmental Protection Agency on the proposed reissuance of National Pollution Discharge Elimination System permits for seven pulp and paper mills on the Penobscot River and the impact of dioxin discharge from their processing operations on the successful nesting of bald eagles. Discussions focus on measures to detect and reduce dioxin levels in the riverine system and ways to monitor the chemical effects on fish-eating birds such as bald eagles.



Water quality standards that protect endangered species, like these extremely rare cat's paw pearlymussels, will help ensure high quality rivers and streams in Ohio for swimming, fishing and drinking.

Our aquatic ecosystems are facing pressure: two-thirds of all freshwater crawfish and mussel species are imperiled, and one-third of freshwater fish species are imperiled. More than 100 fish species became extinct in the 20th century, along with about 30 mussel species, or one of 10. Photo by G. Thomas Watters, Ohio State University, Museum of Zoology

Road Construction and Plant Habitat Acquisition in Georgia

After coordinating with the Service, the Georgia Department of Transportation agreed to purchase one or more high priority granite outcrops, rock landforms that are like mountains but made of granite, with populations of the threatened little amphianthus. The Natural Heritage Program of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources identified areas that would enhance species recovery. The Georgia Department of Transportation will establish forested buffers around the sites for conservation, prohibit vehicle access to the land, and place restrictive covenants on property deeds to protect the plants in perpetuity. Granite quarrying for roads and for memorials is a threat to the little amphianthus. In addition, the vernal pools, which this species occupies on the outcrops, have been negatively affected by off-road vehicles and trash dumping. Amphianthus also occurs in Alabama and South Carolina.

Service coordination on other road projects this year resulted in the State transportation agency's plans to purchase and protect two land tracts that support populations of the endangered large-flowered skullcap. The Service is considering a proposal to reclassify this species.



Preble's meadow jumping mouse. USFWS photo

Flexibility and Innovation at Work to Protect Threatened Preble's Meadow Jumping Mouse

In Wyoming, the Service, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, and the Medicine Bow Lateral Pipeline Company completed formal consultation regarding impacts of the 149-mile-long Medicine Bow Lateral Natural Gas pipeline to the Preble's meadow jumping mouse, Ute ladies'-tresses orchid, and downstream Platte River species. Thanks to early coordination, consultation time was

reduced from 135 days to 60. The pipeline company designed the project to include many innovative measures to minimize the take of listed species, and the Service quickly incorporated the measures into the incidental take statement.

Special rules made under section 4(d) of the Endangered Species Act provide management flexibility for threatened species. In Colorado and Wyoming, the Service has proposed a special rule to conserve the Preble's meadow jumping mouse and open space while maintaining land management for economic return. It will permit, with some restrictions, ongoing rodent control, agricultural activities, landscaping, and existing water rights rangewide along streams. Existing haying operations and grazing practices on private land are also allowed.



The threatened little Amphianthus (right) can be found in temporary pools such as these on granite outcrops. Photo by Al Schotz/Alabama Natural Heritage Program



Flexibility provided through a special rule will protect the Preble's meadow jumping mouse while allowing grazing to continue. Corel Corp. photo

Habitat Conservation Planning

Cactus Ferruginous Pygmy-owl and Residential Development

In Pima County, Arizona, the Lazy K Bar Ranch has created a Habitat Conservation Plan that enables the owners to plan for the long-term economic use of their property while ensuring the continued survival of the endangered cactus ferruginous pygmy-owl. The Habitat Conservation Plan is a two-phase project.

Phase One is continuing to operate the Lazy K Bar Ranch as a western guest ranch featuring outdoor experiences such as horseback-riding in the desert country. Phase Two of the Habitat

Conservation Plan is a contingency plan for the ranch to develop its property in the event that sprawl from Tucson impinges on the peacefulness of the resort. Under Phase Two, the Lazy K Bar Ranch will become a residential area of low-density houses, compatible with what the pygmy-owl is known to use elsewhere in the greater Tucson area. As mitigation, the ranch will salvage and transplant or preserve trees and saguaros, use native vegetation for landscaping, inspect saguaros for nests, and restore about 32 acres of Sonoran desert-scrub habitat. The ranch will protect about 133 acres and develop about 27 acres.

Funding surveys for the owl, the Lazy K Bar Ranch is also monitoring the effects of its activities on the species. Should the Habitat Conservation Plan advance to Phase Two and should owls be found on the property, the ranch will fund a telemetry study to help track behavior such as feeding, breeding, and dispersal, adding to the knowledge-base for this endangered bird.



The cactus ferruginous pygmy-owl is threatened by the destruction and modification of its habitat in Arizona and portions of its range in Mexico. The main threats are urban and agricultural encroachment, woodcutting, water diversion, and channelization. Virtually extirpated from Arizona, once its major range in the United States, the species was listed as endangered there in 1997. USFWS photos



It is encouraging to see a high standard set in the first proposed conservation plan for pygmy-owls. It is encouraging to see such [a standard] initiated by members of the private sector. And it has been encouraging to see the drafters of the proposal work with interested stakeholders in the manner consistent with an expressed 'willingness to come to resolution on all issues.'

It is through the example of the Lazy K [Habitat Conservation Plan] proposal... that ...Tucson can begin to substitute solutions for conflict, and go forward with the hope that both the environment and the economy can be protected. I strongly endorse the spirit which underlies this proposal.

Chuck H. Huckelberry,
Pima County Administrator



The Lazy K Bar Guest Ranch, near Tucson, Arizona, is a cooperator-participant in a Habitat Conservation Plan for endangered cactus ferruginous pygmy-owls. Photo by Carol Moore, General Manager, Lazy K Bar Guest Ranch.

Plum Creek: A Large-Scale Habitat Conservation Plan

The Plum Creek Timber Company is developing a Native Fish Habitat Conservation Plan for almost 1.7 million acres in Montana, northern Idaho, and west-central Washington. Plum Creek has offered to assist Idaho and Montana in developing their statewide HCPs, which would apply to State lands and create a voluntary, streamlined process for private landowners to obtain incidental take authorization while facilitating ecosystem-level conservation of native fishes such as trout, steelhead, salmon, and whitefish.

Habitat Conservation Plans for Utah Prairie Dogs

The Service, U.S. Forest Service, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, and Garfield County have formed a working group to develop a Habitat Conservation Plan for the threatened Utah prairie dog on about 20,000 acres of land. The Garfield County HCP will allow reasonable development on privately owned property. A main provision of the plan is the relocation of Utah prairie dogs from land authorized for development to sites prepared for their occupancy.

Red-cockaded Woodpeckers and the International Paper Company

Four red-cockaded woodpecker nests may not sound like a lot, but to International Paper Company, they're good news. Company ecologists at the Southlands Experiment Forest near Bainbridge, Georgia, spotted the nests of the endangered species just a year after clearing underbrush and installing cavities in 80-year-old longleaf pine trees to attract the birds.

The efforts are part of a Habitat Conservation Plan designed to increase the number of red-cockaded woodpeckers while providing for economic development through forest management activities. A key feature of the Habitat Conservation Plan is a mitigation banking program that enables International Paper Company to make available to other companies any increase in the number of birds above what is necessary to address its needs.

International Paper has said that the Habitat Conservation Plan establishes an economic incentive for protecting endangered species, enabling the company to increase the number of red-cockaded woodpeckers by assuming mitigation responsibilities of other property owners who "desire timely land-management flexibility at market-driven prices."

The company cleared undergrowth to create the open, park-like longleaf pine forests that the woodpeckers seek and installed cavities in mature trees for roosting and nesting. The Southlands Experiment Forest may serve as an "island corridor" with two large woodpecker populations at Apalachicola National Forest and the Red Hills region near Thomasville, Georgia. If the birds find their way to either of these sites and meet mates there, the movement may create genetic interchange among the three populations of the endangered species.



"Land managers," prairie dogs maintain grasslands by controlling woody vegetation such as mesquite and digging burrows that aerate the soil and replace nutrients on the surface. Corel Corp photo



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The red-cockaded woodpecker plays a vital role in southern pine forests. Small mammals and other bird species use the cavities that red-cockaded woodpeckers excavate. Larger woodpeckers can take over the cavities and enlarge them enough for owls, wood ducks, raccoons, and other creatures to move in. USFWS photo

Researchers at the red-cockaded woodpecker project at International Paper Company's Southlands Experiment Forest in Bainbridge, Georgia, hold a peeper-camera that allows them to view the endangered birds from the ground. Photo by Jack Kenner. Reprinted with permission of International Paper Company

