

The Recovery Credit System

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What is a Recovery Credit System?

A RCS is a **framework** for Federal agencies to carry out recovery measures for listed species.

A Federal agency and stakeholders/cooperators build a **species-specific system** to define, accrue, bank, and use (debit) recovery credits through the section 7 consultation process.

RCS Facts

- **Who?** Only Federal agencies may accrue, bank, debit, and trade recovery credits.
- **What?** Recovery credits are an optional process for Federal agencies to conserve listed species.
- **Where?** Credits are accrued on non-Federal lands.
- **When?** Credits may be accrued when a Federal agency develops a Recovery Credit System in coordination with the FWS.
- **How?** RCS Guidance was published in the Federal Register on July 31, 2008.
- **Why?** Recovery Credits must further the recovery of the species.

RCS History

- RCS concept developed in late 2005
- Pilot Project at Fort Hood – in progress
(RCS credits established via concurrence letter dated August 2, 2007)
(RCS debit BA in draft form)
- Other Projects underway in Utah, North Carolina, etc.
- Final Guidance published July 31, 2008

Regulatory Framework

The authority for RCS is section 7 of the ESA

- Listed Species only (no candidate species yet)
- Federal Agencies only

Credits accrued on non-Federal Lands

Credits must match the impact—temporary credits can offset temporary impacts and permanent credits can offset permanent or temporary impacts

What is a Recovery Credit

A **Recovery Credit** is a quantifiable unit of measure recognized by the FWS that represents a contribution to the **recovery** of the species.

RCS Standard

The overall RCS must provide a **Net Benefit to Recovery** for the covered species.

- Net Benefit to Recovery is defined as the enhancement of a species' current status by addressing the threats identified at the time of listing or in a current status review.

A Recovery Credit System

- Can provide increased **flexibility** during section 7 consultations to allow for off-site mitigation.
- Can provide a **market-type incentive**, in which Federal agencies and cooperators increase their conservation activities on non-Federal lands while “getting credit.”

Recovery Credit Systems

Should be organized and implemented by Federal agencies with the full cooperation and assistance of:

- FWS
- State Agencies
- Environmental organizations
- Other private and/or public entities

The more partners the better!

How is RCS different from other programs/tools?

- RCS is different from Safe Harbor Agreements
- RCS is different from conservation or mitigation banking
- RCS is different from wetland banking

The FWS supports cooperative conservation efforts that assist our partners with ESA regulatory compliance and promote recovery of listed species.