

# News Release



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## Secretary Salazar Announces \$57.8 Million in Grants to Support Land Acquisition and Conservation Planning for Endangered Species

Interior Secretary Ken Salazar today announced more than \$57.8 million in grants to 27 states to support conservation planning and acquisition of vital habitat for threatened and endangered fish, wildlife and plants. Seven of those grants will go to support projects in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) Southwest Region. The grants, awarded through the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund, will benefit numerous species ranging from the desert tortoise to the Indiana bat.

"The successful conservation of threatened and endangered species requires a partnership between the federal government and the states," Salazar said. "These grants provide state agencies the resources they need to help protect and conserve listed species and to empower landowners and local communities to be good stewards of the vital habitat that makes the recovery of imperiled species possible."

Authorized by Section 6 of the Endangered Species Act, the competitive 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 approximately \$7.6 million through the Habitat Conservation Planning Assistance Grants Program, \$36 million through the Habitat Conservation Plan Land Acquisition Grants Program, and \$14.1 million through the Recovery Land Acquisition Grants Program. The three programs were established to help avoid potential conflicts between the conservation of threatened and endangered species and land development and use.

"The benefits of these grants goes far beyond the dollar amounts," said Benjamin Tuggle, the Service's Southwest Regional Director. "The partners in stewardship developed in implementing the grants helps ensure that the fish, wildlife and habitat of the southwest survives and thrives."

Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs) are agreements between a non-federal landowner and the Service. These agreements allow a landowner to undertake otherwise lawful activities on their property, even if they 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 jurisdiction and may address multiple species.

Under the HCP Land Acquisition Grants Program, the Service provides grants to states or territories for land acquisitions 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 Wisconsin, which is receiving a \$1.5 million grant to acquire 1,110 acres in the Quincy Bluff and Wetlands State Natural Area. The purchase of these properties will permanently protect habitat for the Karner blue butterfly, substantially benefitting the recovery efforts for the Glacial Lake Wisconsin Karner Blue Butterfly Recovery Unit. This grant will also help connect State Natural Area lands owned by The Nature Conservancy with those owned by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, which currently total over 5,000 acres.

The HCP Planning Assistance Grants 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 states of North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Colorado, and Texas will receive a total of \$1,080,990 to assist in the development of a landscape level, multi-species HCP. The HCP will be designed to avoid and minimize impacts to endangered and threatened species associated with wind energy development. The HCP will encompass the whooping crane migration route in the U.S. and their wintering grounds, along with a significant portion of current and historic habitat of the lesser prairie-chicken. This multi-species HCP will be the first of its kind to involve alternative fuel sources and climate change issues while protecting imperiled species.

Funded HCP's in the Southwest include:

**Multi-State Whooping Crane and Lesser Prairie-Chicken Wind Energy HCP-** The planning proposal lands encompasses the whooping cranes migration route in the U.S. and their wintering grounds, along with containing a significant portion of current and historic habitat of the lesser prairie-chicken. This bi-regional HCP will be the first of its type in the country to involve alternative fuel sources and climate change issues while protecting imperiled species. The states involved are: **Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Texas**, North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Nebraska, Kansas and Colorado. *Federal funding awarded: \$1,080,990.*

**Edwards Aquifer Recovery Implementation Program HCP (TX)** - The scope of the HCP will provide protection throughout the entire range of the eight federally-listed species in the springs and their encompassing aquifer (Edwards Aquifer). The primary threat to these species is the loss of habitat from reduced springflows. *Federal funds awarded: \$1,063,125.*

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 \$840,593 to acquire a 1,242-acre tract that will protect the ocelot, jaguarundi, northern aplomado falcon, and several

state-protected species in Cameron County, Texas. Protection of thornscrub woodlands and wooded waterways, such as resacas, is sorely needed to prevent ocelot and jaguarundi from declining even further and is imperative to both species' long-term recovery. The tract contains a wooded riparian zone along a resaca that provides existing suitable habitat for a travel corridor, and is large enough to support three adult ocelots. The protection of this property will contribute to recovery plan criteria by protecting existing corridors and creating new dispersal corridors.

Funded Recovery Land Acquisition Grants in the Southwest included:

**Arizona Game and Fish Department: Sonoita Creek Ranch Acquisition-** This project will help to fund the acquisition of a 1,126-acre tract in Santa Cruz County, Arizona that will primarily benefit the Gila topminnow by expanding their distribution. The project will also provide more security to the Monkey Springs population of Gila topminnow. *Federal funding awarded: \$307,542.*

**Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation: An Eco-region Approach for Recovery and Protection of Karst Dependent Federally Listed Species-** This project will provide funding in order to acquire the 382-acre J.R. Higgins tract, the 352-acre Bashaw tract and the 240-acre Howard tract (all are of high ecological value within Oklahoma and Arkansas). The J.R. Higgins tract was selected as a priority because it contains Anticline Cave (called Roberts Cave in the Gray Bat Recovery Plan), which is used as a maternity site by nearly 30,000 gray bats and is identified as a priority cave for acquisition in the Gray Bat Recovery Plan. *Federal funding awarded: \$569,790.*

**The Nature Conservancy: Creating the Ranchito-Laguna Atascosa Corridor for Ocelots and other Wildlife in South Texas-** This project will provide funding in order to acquire through fee title a 1,242-acre tract that will help to protect the ocelot, jaguarundi, northern aplomado falcon, and several State-listed species, located in Cameron County, Texas. Protection of thornscrub woodlands and wooded waterways, such as resacas, is a high priority for ocelot and jaguarundi continued existence as well as being needed for both species' recovery. The 1,242-acres tract contains a wooded riparian zone along a resaca that provides existing suitable habitat for a travel corridor, and is large enough to potentially support three adult ocelots. The acquisition will contribute to recovery plan criteria: protect existing corridors and create new dispersal corridors. *Federal funding awarded: \$840,593.*

For a complete list of the 2009 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](http://www.fws.gov)**.