

Subactivity: Endangered Species
Program Element: Candidate Conservation

		2007 Actual	2008 Enacted	2009		Change from 2008 (+/-)	
				Fixed Costs & Related Changes (+/-)	Program Changes (+/-)		Budget Request
Candidate Conservation	(\$000) FTE	8,425 43	9,731 66	+189	-1,261	8,659 65	- 1,072 -1

Summary of 2009 Program Changes for Candidate Conservation

Request Component	(\$000)	FTE
• General Program Activities	-985	-1
• Idaho Sage-grouse	-246	0
• Travel Reduction	-26	0
• Contracts Reduction	-4	0
Total, Program Changes	-1,261	-1

Justification of 2009 Program Changes

The 2009 budget request for Candidate Conservation is \$8,659,000,000 and 65 FTE, a program change of -\$1,261,000 and -1 FTE from 2008 Enacted.

General Program Activities (-\$985,000)

Through the Endangered Species Program’s new draft strategic plan, the Candidate Conservation Program has adopted a more strategic and collaborative approach to conservation. The Program is helping other Service programs, as well as other Federal and non-Federal partners, leverage limited resources to benefit prioritized candidate and other species-at-risk by targeting and coordinating their conservation actions. Savings can be realized through increased collaboration and focusing our efforts on a subset of prioritized species, thus making it possible for the Service to propose reducing general program activity funding for Candidate Conservation.

Idaho Sage-Grouse (-\$246,000)

In FY 2008, the Service will modify an existing cooperative agreement with the Idaho Office of Species Conservation (OSC), the Governor’s oversight office for federally listed, candidate, and petitioned species to transfer \$246,000 for greater sage-grouse conservation in Idaho through habitat improvement projects, sage-grouse research and management projects, and implementation of the Idaho Sage-Grouse Management Plan (Management Plan). The Service is not requesting additional or continued Candidate Conservation funding for this earmark in FY 2009. Funding a narrowly focused congressional add does not provide the Service flexibility to deliver sagebrush/sage-grouse conservation actions in the most effective manner possible. Sage-grouse is found in 14 states and the Service would prefer to be able to direct funds more evenly as needed. The State of Idaho and the Office of Species Conservation are eligible to apply for grant funding for sage-grouse conservation actions or plan implementation through the Service’s State Wildlife Grants program.

Program Performance Change

No table is included as the measures are not impacted by the projected funding changes.

Program Overview

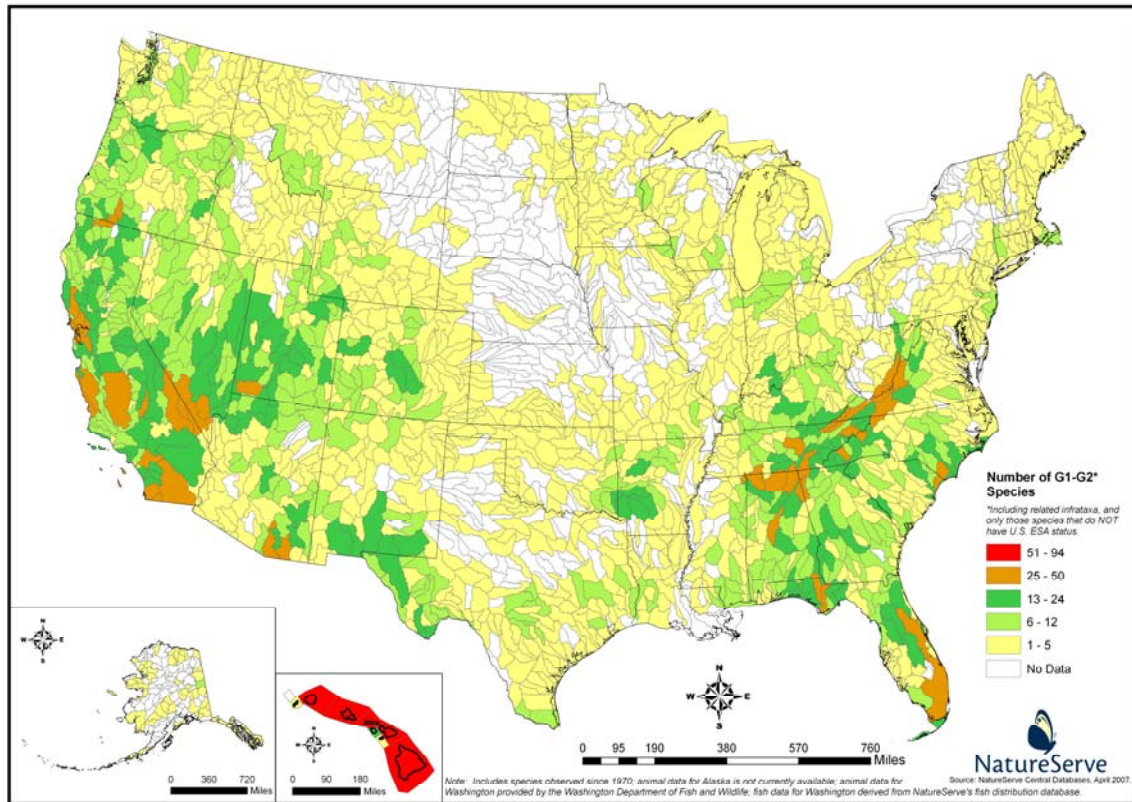
The Candidate Conservation Program is a central tenet of the draft Endangered Species Strategic Plan. The Plan focuses on two coequal Strategic Goals—one of which is conserving species-at-risk (Strategic Goal 2). The Candidate Conservation Program works with Federal agencies, States and Territories, Tribes, and the private sector to keep these species from declining to the point that they warrant listing under the *Endangered Species Act*. The Plan describes species-at-risk as those species that are candidates for listing or likely to become candidates in the near future. Thus, the Candidate Conservation Program's role in the implementation of the Strategic Plan is significant.

In the Strategic Plan, the Program seeks to expand conservation actions that are successful in making listing unnecessary. To make the most effective use of the limited resources available to the Service and its Partners, a list of priority species-at-risk was developed by Service staff. The majority of future conservation efforts will be focused on these prioritized species. These conservation efforts will be guided by the threats identified through the ESA 5-factor analysis that is part of the species assessment process. The candidate assessment process includes obtaining (e.g. from States, other Federal agencies, species experts) and evaluating new information on biology, threats, and on-going conservation activities to update information about existing candidates for listing and determine whether they can be removed from candidate status or whether their listing priority can decrease due to conservation efforts or for other reasons. Species assessment forms are updated annually for all candidate species; a species assessment form will also be completed for each non-candidate priority species-at-risk selected during the initial stage of implementing this Plan.

A key need in species conservation is better guidance for what conservation measures are needed to reduce or remove threats, and how, when, and where to develop Candidate Conservation Agreements (CCA), Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances (CCAA), or other conservation strategies and individual projects so that they are more focused and effective in addressing threats identified through the assessment process. To address this need, the candidate assessment process is giving greater emphasis to identifying conservation measures needed for reducing or removing threats, including the type, scope, and scale of recommended conservation agreements and actions. When appropriate, this process includes recommendations for multi-species and/or landscape scale approaches to conservation, since many listed and candidate species occur in the same general area and face similar threats. The Service uses this information to improve technical assistance and encourage partnerships to develop CCAs, CCAAs, or similar documents to effectively address threats to candidates and other species-at-risk. The information also can result in more targeted and effective conservation activities by other Service programs and other partners. A recent example of such technical assistance from the Candidate Conservation program involves the Sand Mountain blue butterfly in Nevada. Conservation efforts in a conservation plan for this species and its habitat were the key basis for the Service's recent determination that listing this species is unnecessary.

The Service continues to work closely with NatureServe to update maps showing watersheds where candidate and other critically imperiled or imperiled species (NatureServe's "G1" and G2" species rankings, respectively) occur. These maps help identify opportunities for collaborative conservation for candidates and species that may become so in the near future. They also can assist other programs within the Service, other Federal agencies, the States, and other partners in conducting strategic habitat conservation planning and designing conservation activities in those areas where the most species can benefit, thereby maximizing limited conservation funds. The Service also continues to work with NatureServe on information and processes that can provide greater consistency in the assignment of a listing priority number to each candidate species, based on an evaluation of the magnitude and imminence of threats. This information also can help guide priorities for conservation actions.

Number of U.S. FWS Candidate and NatureServe Imperiled (G1-G2)* Species by 8-Digit Watershed



As one of the primary components of the Strategic Plan, candidate conservation will be emphasized in future years. Success towards this goal will be measured through changes in Status Indicators, percentage of conservation actions implemented for priority species-at-risk, and percentage of species-at-risk with conservation agreements or strategies in place. By focusing Service and partner efforts on both a subset of species and on two primary goals—conservation of species-at-risk and recovery of listed species—the Strategic Plan directs the Endangered Species program in a way to ensure future success.

Use of Cost and Performance Information

The Service has developed a more strategic approach to setting priorities for making listing species unnecessary. This includes using information in species assessments and the NatureServe maps to identify candidate species for which threats can be reduced or removed through habitat restoration or other conservation actions on non-Federal lands, as compared to species that will be most affected by conservation efforts on Federal lands or on a combination of land ownerships.

2009 Program Performance

Currently, 281 species are candidates for listing, and the number may increase substantially by FY 2009 due to pending petitions to list several hundred additional species. However, we anticipate that work begun in FY 2007 in the Listing Program that will be completed in FY 2008, will result in a reduction in the number of candidates in FY 2009 to approximately 220, due to proposed rules to list species or determinations that listing is not warranted. In FY 2009, the Candidate Conservation Program will continue providing technical assistance for developing CCAs, CCAAs, and facilitating voluntary

conservation efforts by private landowners, States, tribes, territories, federal agencies, and partners for priority candidate and other species-at-risk for which potential listing is a concern. The Service will focus efforts on priority species identified using the criteria in the program's Strategic Plan to be finalized in 2008. The majority of future conservation efforts will be focused on these prioritized species, such as the Coral Pink Sand Dunes tiger beetle in Utah, New England cottontail, Florida leafwing butterfly, and Page springsnail from Arizona. The Service's cross-program approach to candidate conservation will continue. This includes sharing information resources and expertise, and coordinating conservation work for priority species and geographic focal areas in order to increase efficiency and maximize benefits to target species.

Proposed accomplishments in FY 2009 are as follows:

- Through continued collaboration with the States and other partners, the program will conduct activities to meet the goal of reducing the number of species-at-risk for listing through conservation actions or agreements. Due to the time needed to work with partnerships to design and prepare collaborative conservation activities, begin implementation, and determine effectiveness on a scale that is meaningful to the species, the program will strive to meet this goal.
- The Service will complete rigorous assessments under the candidate assessment process for approximately 230 species. This includes the 220 species we estimate will be candidates at the beginning of FY 2009 plus 10 additional species that will be assessed for possible elevation to candidate status. Based on past history, we expect some species will be removed from candidate status and others may be elevated to candidate status. Species assessments include information on threats that help to guide the design of conservation agreements and actions so that listing might become unnecessary for some candidate species. The exact number of candidate species in 2009 will depend on the outcome of the assessments of existing candidates, as well as the outcome of findings on existing petitions to list several hundred additional species. Funding for the petition findings is provided through the Listing Program. If the Service finds that listing is warranted but precluded by other higher priority listing actions, the Service considers the petitioned species to be a candidate for listing and we address its conservation through the Candidate Conservation Program pending development of a proposed listing rule or removal from candidate status due to conservation efforts or other reasons.
- The Service will provide a second year of increased support for a science-based effort to assess and enhance terrestrial and aquatic habitats at a landscape scale in the Green River Basin (Secretary's Healthy Land Initiative), while facilitating responsible energy development through local collaboration and partnerships. This effort, which focuses on conservation efforts for the greater sage-grouse, includes funds to support development of a Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances involving multiple non-Federal landowners, as well as an overarching conservation strategy for the greater sage-grouse across all land ownerships in the Basin. Many other more common species that use sagebrush ecosystems will also benefit. The Service also will continue implementing candidate conservation efforts for the Colorado River cutthroat trout in the Basin. Additional energy development in the Green River focal area increases the need to more thoroughly evaluate on-going and potential impacts from that development and to conduct more comprehensive surveys for these two species, as well the White River penstemon, a candidate plant species, and other plant species that are endemic to the drainage.
- The Service will continue to provide technical assistance to our partners to implement specific activities identified in CCAs and CCAAs, particularly for our prioritized candidate and species-at-risk. For example, landowners continue to enroll in the programmatic CCAA for the Arkansas yellowcheek darter, signed in early 2007, and implement actions to enhance and protect the water

resources for the darter. The Service also will provide information and training to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of candidate conservation efforts. This includes continuing to work in close partnership with the States to design and implement new conservation agreements, strategies, and management actions for candidate and potential candidate species identified in the State Wildlife Action Plans. It also includes continuing strong coordination with the Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program to help private landowners implement habitat restoration projects that are likely to be effective in addressing threats and thus helping make listing unnecessary for certain candidate and other species-at-risk.