

2.0 Preplanning Considerations

Before beginning work on a recovery plan, a number of preliminary decisions must be made and actions must be taken. These decisions set the stage for recovery planning and encompass considerations such as the scope of the plan, logistical issues, interim management of the species until a recovery plan is completed, participation in the planning process, appointing a recovery team, and setting up the administrative record for the recovery process. The Recovery Outline (see section 3.0) provides a template for documenting preplanning decisions.

2.1 Determining the Scope of the Recovery Plan

Single-species recovery plans have been the most common type of plan prepared since the enactment of the ESA. However, multiple species plans and ecosystem plans have gained increasing currency since the mid-1990s. It is important to note that, although the ESA appears to focus on the individual species, subspecies, or distinct population segments (DPSs)², the purposes of the ESA include conserving the ecosystems upon which listed species depend. Recovery plans should aim to address threats by restoring or protecting ecosystem functions or processes whenever and wherever possible (as opposed to actions that require long-term and possibly expensive management programs). This approach is science-based and provides a means for required habitat to be maintained long-term in a dynamic way by natural processes.

² A Distinct Population Segment is a population segment that is discrete in relation to the remainder of the species to which it belongs, and significant to the species to which it belongs. An Evolutionarily Significant Unit (ESU) of Pacific Salmon is considered a DPS. DPSs must be designated through a rulemaking. See the Policy Regarding the Recognition of Distinct Vertebrate Population Segments Under the Endangered Species Act (FWS and NOAA 1996) for more discussion of discreteness and significance.

This broader perspective should be infused into all recovery plans, whether they be for single species (including subspecies and DPSs), or multiple species.

Three possible biological scopes for recovery efforts exist, and choosing the appropriate scope requires careful consideration:

- Single species/subspecies/DPS
- Multiple species
- Ecosystem

A fourth scope, recovery plans for individual populations of a wide-ranging species (such as peregrine falcons and bald eagles), was used occasionally in the past. Because this has led to problems later in the process, we now recommend that planning documents for entities smaller than the listed entity should only be developed in the context of recovery of the entire listed entity, using recovery criteria clearly set out for the entire listed entity (see section 2.1.1, Single Species/Subspecies/DPS Plans, for further discussion).

The appropriate scope for the recovery planning effort may be evident from the listing package (whether it was prepared for a single species, a group of species, or for multiple species within an imperiled ecosystem). However, there may be circumstances where it is appropriate to plan recovery at a different scope than that at which the species was listed, for such reasons as the following:

- If a species is without a recovery plan and occupies the same habitat and has similar recovery needs as another species or group of species, it may be possible to incorporate the species into a recovery plan for the other species. This can be done when a recovery plan is being written for the other species or by incorporating recovery criteria, management actions, and time and cost estimates for the new species into an existing plan by preparing an amendment to the existing plan (see section 6.2.3, Plan Addenda).

- In some cases, it may be preferable to prepare a plan for a single species which was listed in the same listing rule as other species. This may occur, for instance, when circumstance dictates a need to prepare immediately a plan for a particular species because unique taxonomy, threats, or other reasons indicate the need for more species-specific recovery strategies, or if an opportunity arises for a particular species expert to expedite planning.
- If a number of species that occupy the same ecosystem were listed separately, it may be most efficient and effective to prepare a multiple-species or ecosystem plan. Multiple-species plans may provide the opportunity to explicitly address any contradictory recovery needs of two or more species. In addition, including numerous species within an area in one plan can be more user-friendly for local property owners and planners. Plan revisions may provide an opportunity to combine species that were previously addressed in separate plans or that do not have plans. However, it is necessary to ensure that species included in a multiple-species plan are each given adequate and appropriate attention.

2.1.1 Single Species/Subspecies/DPS Plans

Given that taxa are listed and delisted as “species” (defined in the ESA as including subspecies and DPSs), a single species plan is the most straightforward scope to use for an individual planning effort. If the species is distinct from other listed species in its floral/faunal community with respect to its habitat requirements and threats and/or if it is the only listed species in its general geographic area, a single-species plan is likely the most appropriate.

Although a DPS is treated as a separate species under the ESA and thus may have a separate recovery plan, it is important to note that a recovery plan *cannot* be used to designate a DPS.

Designation of a DPS requires a rulemaking process.

2.1.2 Multiple Species Plans

If two or more species occur in the same geographical area or jurisdiction, and share common threats or management needs, a multiple species plan may be the most appropriate. This type of plan may also be helpful when species with overlapping ranges have seemingly contradictory recovery needs that need to be resolved early to accommodate the recovery of both species. Many authors have recommended multiple-species recovery plans as a way to plan more efficiently and to better implement management actions (Franklin 1993; Clark 1994; Tear et al. 1995; Carroll et al. 1996; Simberloff 1997). Despite this, a comprehensive study of recovery plans conducted by the Society for Conservation Biology (SCB) concluded that the multiple species plans that were approved as of 2000 paid less attention to the individual listed species included in each plan compared with single species plans (Clark and Harvey 2002). The SCB study found that individual listed species in multiple-species plans had less robust scientific underpinning, objectives, and recommendations, and that trends in status for individual species tended to be less positive than those for species with single-species recovery plans. Therefore, the benefits of preparing a multiple-species plan should be carefully assessed, and the following considerations should be kept in mind:

- Each listed species in the plan should be fully addressed in terms of status, threats, and biological needs and constraints (this does not mean that these items need be addressed for each species separately but that a reader should be able to discern each species’ status, threats, etc., easily from the information provided).
- Objective, measurable recovery criteria must be developed for each species, although it may be possible for the same criteria to apply to more than one species where the threats are identical.
- Recovery actions should be consolidated for multiple species whenever possible to

maximize effectiveness, but should indicate which species will be affected.

- Individual species can be independently listed, reclassified, or delisted, and the plan updated or revised accordingly.
- In general, multiple-species plans will be more expansive documents, and means for keeping them updated and useful should be considered during the planning process.

2.1.3 Ecosystem Plans

If several listed species in a shared biotic community rely on protection and/or restoration of their ecosystem to reach recovery, an ecosystem plan may be appropriate. (Many recovery plans identified as "ecosystem" plans in the past are actually multiple-species plans). In this type of plan, most recovery actions will be directed toward ensuring the sustainability of the ecosystem upon which all of the listed species (and other species) depend. While ecosystem functions and status comprise the cornerstone of this type of plan, the role and recovery needs of individual listed species must be addressed within the ecosystem context. The biological connection between the ecosystem and the listed species should be clearly described. Recovery objectives and criteria, including those linked to the threats that were the basis for listing, must be provided on a species by species basis, although ecosystem-based criteria may be included as well. One of the few examples of an ecosystem plan is the Recovery Plan for the Endangered and Threatened Species of Ash Meadows (FWS 1990).