

Idaho Governor's Office of Species Conservation

Strategic Plan

2010 - 2014

C. L. "Butch" Otter, Governor
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Our Mission

The Governor's Office of Species Conservation is dedicated to planning, coordinating and implementing the State's actions to preserve, protect and restore species listed as threatened, endangered or a candidate under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). This work will be done in coordination with the State natural resource agencies and with the input of the citizens of Idaho, while taking into consideration the economic vitality of the State.

Principles and Values

- Rely upon science and common sense in developing conservation programs
- Involve all parties impacted by recovery decisions
- Understand and incorporate Idaho values into conservation measures
- Incorporate the State's need for economic vitality into considerations for species recovery

Goals

1. Coordinate federal ESA programs with State agencies
2. Solicit, provide oversight and delegate funding for ESA programs
3. Negotiate agreements with federal agencies concerning endangered species
4. Establish superior constituent services for State, federal and private stakeholders seeking assistance with ESA issues

Conservation Objectives

1. Work with State natural resource agencies to coordinate the State's actions on all ESA recovery plans, management plans, public comment periods, biological opinions, guidance programs and species specific recovery projects. The Office of Species Conservation (OSC) relies on the expertise and knowledge of respective State agencies to achieve species recovery.

Performance Measure

OSC will consult with, provide advice to and collaborate with appropriate staff from respective State and federal agencies to coordinate actions on ESA-listed species.

Benchmarks

- Idaho wolf depredation compensation board
- Salmon / steelhead conservation
- Slickspot peppergrass conservation
- Bull trout conservation
- Grizzly bear conservation
- Idaho ground squirrels conservation
- Sage grouse conservation

- Idaho mollusks conservation
 - White sturgeon conservation
 - Kootenai river habitat policy team
 - TMDL plans and protection of beneficial uses
 - Forest practices act implementation
 - Transportation infrastructure
 - Agricultural best management practices (BMP) implementation
 - Recreational opportunities
 - Comprehensive state water plan implementation
 - Coordination and implementation of subbasin plans
 - Climate change and ESA policy coordination
 - Energy development and ESA policy coordination
2. Solicit, provide, and delegate funding towards efforts that: a) preclude the need for listing of species through conservation efforts; b) preserve and restore listed species through conservation efforts; and c) de-list recovered species through conservation efforts. On-the-ground measures funded through OSC, in combination with adequate planning and monitoring, will result in fewer listed species and ultimately result in the removal of species from federal oversight under the ESA.

Performance Measure

OSC will coordinate efforts to secure appropriate funding sources for species recovery efforts and facilitate the use of those funds in a cost effective manner.

Benchmarks

- Salmon Recovery
 - Coldwater Fisheries
 - Gray Wolf
 - Bruneau Hot Spring Snail
 - Slickspot Peppergrass
 - Sage Grouse
 - Idaho Ground Squirrels
 - Caribou
 - Roadless Initiatives
 - Climate Change / alpine species
 - Energy Development
3. Facilitate and/or participate in the development of protection plans for private landowners who have threatened or endangered species on their property or who have the potential to assist in the recovery of the species.

Performance Measure

OSC will assist interested parties with the development and/or implementation of conservation measures or processes to de-list or re-categorize species which may warrant changes in their management status.

Benchmarks

- Implement and monitor the Candidate Conservation Agreement for Slickspot Peppergrass
 - Implement and monitor the statewide conservation strategy for greater sage grouse
 - Participate in development of Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances for southern Idaho ground squirrel
 - Complete the Upper Salmon Basin Agreement
 - Implement and monitor the Clearwater / Salmon forestry agreement
 - Amend the federal rule governing the nonessential experimental population of wolves
 - Develop program to review the population status of bull trout for possible de-listing
 - Develop Grizzly Bear Plan for the Yellowstone ecosystem
 - Comments on recovery plan for northern Idaho ground squirrel
 - Develop conservation plans to preclude the need to list sage grouse
 - Develop conservation plans to preclude the need to list Columbia spotted frog
 - Develop conservation plans to preclude the need to list of burbot
 - Develop 5-year status reviews on four snails on the middle Snake River -- Idaho springsnail, Bliss Rapids snail, Utah valvata, and Banbury Springs lanx
 - Develop petition to delist Idaho springsnail and possible petitions on Utah valvata and Bliss Rapids snail
 - Develop and implement Candidate Conservation Agreement on federal, state and private lands for sage grouse
 - Develop conservation strategy to preclude ESA listing of Big Lost River mountain whitefish
 - Develop conservation strategy to preclude ESA listing of American pika
 - Explore links between climate change and ESA listing petitions for alpine species
4. Develop proactive initiatives on ESA reform, both at the State and Federal level, in conjunction with the Governor's Office desire to provide Idahoans' superior constituent services.

Performance Measure

OSC will continue to explore new and innovative avenues for ESA reform and establish mechanisms for enhanced communication with constituents

Benchmarks

- Increase the reliable use of "best available data"
- Recognize fully the State's efforts under Section 4 of the ESA
- Develop efficient processing of de-listing petitions
- Improve and better utilize Section 6 of the ESA
- Increase the pace of agreement development under Section 10 of the ESA
- Assist constituencies with ESA Section 7 processes
- Mesh funding and granting opportunities with ESA policy
- Develop a Rare and Declining Species Policy for Idaho
- Complete aforementioned agreements and de-listings regarding sage grouse, anadromous fish, wolves, grizzly bear and snails
- Participate in policy forums and publish analyses on ESA reform
- Serve as ombudsman for Idaho citizens to address issues or concerns related to the ESA
- Establish constituent forums where the public and elected officials can communicate with OSC staff regarding ESA concerns and receive updates on species conservation efforts
- Serve as repository for agreements and plans among governmental entities in the state of Idaho to conserve threatened and endangered species

External Factors

Endangered Species Litigation

Threatened and endangered species issues tend to have fluctuating priorities. A species and/or habitat issue receiving a lot of focus at one moment may be suddenly have a lesser priority depending upon the biological, social, political or cultural ramifications of current events, petitions or litigation. State agencies must be flexible to adapt to those shifts in priorities as they occur.

Unpredictable Federal Funding

Congressional vagaries in how it allocates T&E funding results in significant uncertainty for State agencies. Priorities and action plans must have a level of flexibility built in so that State agencies can adjust their focus if the funding for a particular species and/or habitat issue “dries up”.

Environmental Unpredictability

Unforeseen environmental events (i.e. catastrophic wildfire) resulting in significant impacts to either species or habitats has the potential to affect how State agencies prioritize work plans and spending.