

Idaho Governor's Office of Species Conservation

Strategic Plan

2016-2020

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 conserve and recover species listed as threatened, endangered or candidate under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). This work is done in coordination with the States' natural resource agencies and with the input of the citizens of Idaho, while taking into consideration the economic vitality of the State.

Our Vision

The Governor's Office of Species Conservation seeks to provide unsurpassed constituent services for state, federal and private stakeholders seeking assistance with ESA issues.

Our Goals

Goal #1: Coordinated implementation of State policy among State agencies pertaining to federal ESA programs.

Objective:

Work with State natural resource agencies to coordinate the State's actions on all ESA recovery plans, management plans, public comment periods, biological opinions, species specific recovery projects, and assistance programs.

Strategies:

1. Continue working with state agencies affected by ESA actions.
2. Coordinate and/or facilitate policy review meetings with State and federal agencies to address major topics within the context of federal ESA program implementation.
3. Communicate the Executive Office's recommendations regarding ESA policy to affected agencies.
4. Provide guidance and coordination for State agencies incorporating State policy into their federal ESA implementation programs.
5. Continue work on the Rare and Declining Species policy for the State of Idaho.

Performance Measure:

State agencies will be able to implement State policy with greater clarity, efficiency and effectiveness.

Benchmark(s):

- Provide regular updates to germane State agencies regarding greater sage-grouse conservation, woodland caribou critical habitat, wolverine conservation planning, grizzly bear delisting, salmon, steelhead and bull trout recovery planning and conservation programs and other priorities of the Governor.
- Assist the Idaho Office of Energy Resources with transmission line project planning, including Gateway West and Boardman to Hemingway.
- Represent the Executive Office on the Governor's Roadless Rule Task Force.
- Assist Local Working Groups with the coordination, funding and implementation of Idaho's Sage Grouse Management Plan.
- Continue to work with state and local federal agencies and provide technical and policy guidance on the implementation of sage grouse conservation projects in key areas pursuant to the Governor's Sage-grouse Conservation Strategy. .
- Coordinate financial assistance to Rangeland Fire Protection Associations (RFPA) to increase the effectiveness of initial attack on wildfires within the sage-steppe ecosystem.
- Provide assistance and/or technical and policy support to State agencies on Salmon/Steelhead recovery efforts.
- Coordinate and oversee salmon and steelhead technical recovery groups in the Clearwater and Upper Salmon Basin.
- Coordinate with IDFG, federal agencies and affected producers on wolf/livestock conflicts.
- Continue to coordinate with state natural resource agencies on conservation efforts to preclude the need to list candidate species as threatened or endangered.
- Provide technical and policy expertise on federal listing proposals of Multi-District Litigation (MDL) settlement.
- Coordinate and develop state comments in response to myriad federal regulations affecting candidate, and ESA-listed species.
- Provide technical and policy expertise for Yellowstone Grizzly Bear delisting.
- Monitor ESA listing petitions to insure that the state is prepared to provide comments when and where applicable.

Goal #2: Negotiate agreements with federal natural resource agencies that rely upon science and common sense, involve all parties affected by ESA decisions, and incorporate Idaho's economic vitality and values into the decision making process.

Objective:

Facilitate and/or participate in the development of species and/or habitat conservation programs with Idaho citizens and industries that may be affected by ESA species decisions.

Strategies:

1. Evaluate the implications that resource management agreements have on the State of Idaho and its citizens.
2. Work closely with elected officials who are involved in setting national ESA policy.
3. Review and make recommendations to the Executive Office on ESA policy decisions.
4. Communicate the Executive Office's interests during agreement negotiations.

5. Work closely with State agencies to ensure that agreements incorporate the best available science and data.
6. Strive to strike a balance between species conservation, industry, and Idaho's way of life.

Performance Measure:

Natural resource conservation agreements will have been fully and thoroughly vetted by germane constituencies and result in sensible outcomes for all interested parties.

Benchmark(s):

- Implement and monitor the statewide conservation strategy for greater sage-grouse.
- Develop and implement the greater sage-grouse habitat mitigation strategy. Future iterations may have broader applications to multiple shrub-steppe species.
- Participate in bull trout recovery planning.
- Participate in Spring/Summer Chinook and Steelhead recovery planning.
- Participate in the development of a tri-state agreement to monitor grizzly bear mortality following the delisting of Yellowstone grizzly bears.

Goal #3: Coordinated solicitation, reasonable oversight and cost effective allocation of funding resources for ESA programs.

Objective:

Solicit, provide, and delegate funding towards efforts that: a) assist in precluding the need for listing species and through conservation efforts; b) recover listed species through conservation efforts; and c) delist recovered species through on-the-ground conservation efforts.

Strategies:

1. Provide guidance and coordination for State agencies and organizations seeking to obtain state and federal funding for conservation projects.
2. Simplify, to the greatest extent possible, the processes involved for organizations /agencies to apply for, and obtain funds for conservation projects.
3. Establish coordinated financial processes with respective State agencies to ensure timely fiscal transactions.
4. Work with the Department of Financial Management to ensure that all federal assistance programs meet or exceed federal assistance program management requirements.
5. Ensure that federally funded projects comply with applicable federal law.
6. Ensure that federally funded projects are providing measurable benefits to species.

Performance Measure:

Agencies and organizations seeking grant funds through the Office of Species Conservation will receive awards in a timely and efficient manner with minimal hassle, and receive outstanding technical support from OSC staff.

Benchmark(s):

- Conduct biannual request for proposals (RFP) for Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery (PCSRF) funds and provide technical assistance to projects sponsors.
- Coordinate and distribute PCSRF funding for qualified projects.
- Provide technical assistance to project sponsors of Snake River Basin Adjudication (SRBA) funded projects.

- Solicit and coordinate projects for funding under the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) Accord funding.
- Provide technical assistance to project sponsors of Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) funded Upper Salmon River Planning and Coordination Project.
- Solicit congressional funding for ESA listed and candidate species and habitat projects.
- Solicit, coordinate and distribute Idaho wolf depredation compensation program funds.
- Collect and document grant programs accomplishments for distribution to constituencies and cooperators.
- Ensure grant program financial information is collected, maintained and presented in accordance with established or stated federal accounting criteria.
- Ensure grant program compliance procedures meet or exceed federal standards.
- Improve staffing efficiencies.
- Continue to work with the Idaho legislature on securing funding for the ongoing implementation of the Governor's Sage Grouse Conservation Strategy.

Goal #4: Unsurpassed constituent services for State, federal and private stakeholders seeking assistance with ESA issues.

Objective:

Fulfill our mandate to provide the people of the State of Idaho with an ombudsman to assist with ESA issues.

Strategies:

1. Provide clear, concise and timely responses to requests for ESA policy information.
2. Keep abreast of evolving policy issues at the National, State and local level.
3. Provide rapid analyses and responses pertaining to ESA policy decisions and federal actions impacting Idaho's citizens.
4. Maintain effective communication with key entities concerned with ESA policy implementation (e.g. legislators, legislative staff, germane legislative committees, local governments and elected officials).
5. Establish and maintain effective communication with key Congressional personnel to keep informed of changes in national ESA policy.
6. Maintain a visible presence in the field with constituents; which will ensure OSC staff has a deep understanding of the issues on the ground.

Performance Measure:

Idaho citizenry will feel that their ESA issues and concerns have been heard, and believe that to the greatest extent possible, OSC staff did their best to address those concerns.

Benchmark(s):

- Serve as repository for agreements and plans among governmental entities in the State of Idaho to conserve threatened and endangered species.
- Establish constituent forums where the public and elected officials can communicate with OSC staff regarding ESA concerns and receive updates on species conservation efforts.
- Establish efficiencies in the processing of de-listing petitions.
- Assist constituencies with ESA Section 6 processes.
- Assist constituencies with ESA Section 7 processes.
- Assist constituencies with ESA Section 10 processes.

- Assist constituencies with NEPA processes.
- Assist constituencies with finding on-the-ground solutions.
- Continue to receive constituent input regarding the draft Rare and Declining Species policy while proceeding with its development.

External Factors

Endangered Species Litigation

ESA 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

Shrinking federal dollars and competing programs result in significant funding uncertainties 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.