



# Recovery Planning

## What is a Recovery Plan?

Recovery is the process by which listed species and their ecosystems are restored and their future safeguarded to the point that protections under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) are no longer needed. A variety of actions are necessary to achieve the goal of recovery, from ecological restoration of habitat to the development of conservation agreements with stakeholders. However, without a plan to organize and coordinate the many possible recovery actions, the effort(s) may be misguided. It is important to note that although the focus of parts of the ESA is on the individual species, the purpose of the ESA is to conserve the ecosystems upon which listed species depend.

A recovery plan is the road map to recovery:

- It delineates those aspects of the species' biology, life history, and threats that are pertinent to its endangerment and recovery.
- It outlines and justifies a recovery strategy.
- It identifies site-specific management actions necessary to support recovery of the species.
- It identifies objective, measurable goals and criteria that, when met, would result in a determination that the species be removed from the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants.
- It estimates the time frame required for accomplishing recovery.
- It estimates the cost of complete recovery of the species.

## What does a Recovery Plan include?

Identification of, and strategies for dealing with, the factors that lead to listing or continue to threaten the species should be addressed in the recovery plan. Merely returning a species to widespread abundance does not ensure its long-term sustainability; it is only by alleviating threats that lasting recovery can be possible. The reasons for a species' decline often comprise an interrelated suite of factors, rather than a linear cause-and-effect of a single factor. A recovery plan must identify, analyze, and determine the relationships among threats so that a recovery strategy can be designed that effectively reduces these threats. A recovery plan must also outline the characteristics of a population that make it vulnerable to, and that allow it to recover from, environment, demographic, and human-caused threats.

Although most of the actions included in the recovery plan should be those that are expected to be carried out in the near future, all tasks necessary to achieve full recovery of the species should be identified. Limiting actions to those that are expected to be carried out in the near future will sacrifice long-term planning for short-term goals and will not give an accurate assessment of what is necessary to achieve the stated recovery objective. All actions are assigned numerical priorities according to the relative contribution they may make to the species' recovery.

## **What is a Recovery Team?**

Under the Federal Endangered Species Act, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service may procure the services of appropriate public and private agencies and institutions, and other qualified persons in developing recovery plans. Recovery teams are often used to write recovery plans, especially when various parties have expertise or interest in the species or the factors that affect it. Recovery teams can bring together the diversity of expertise most appropriate to understanding a particular species' endangerment and devising an effective program for its recovery.

## **Why have a Recovery Team?**

Recovery teams can provide stakeholders with the opportunity to participate in the planning and implementation of actions necessary to sustain and recover the listed species; ensure that a diversity of options for the recovery strategy are considered; and help to develop plans that are practical and feasible.

## **What are the limits of a Recovery Team's role?**

Recovery teams are not subject to the Federal Advisory Committee Act. Recovery teams are convened at the discretion, and work under the authorization, of the Service's Regional Director. A recovery team provides biological advice to the Regional Director and serves only in an advisory capacity to the Service, which must balance sound science with management considerations. The Regional Director, not the recovery team, exercises the Service's authority and responsibility with respect to all recovery actions. Lines of communication between the team and the Service are direct and will be thoroughly reviewed with the team during the initial stages of recovery planning.

## **How will the public be involved?**

Section 4(f) of the Endangered Species Act requires public review of all new or revised recovery plans prior to approval. Our intent is to inform the public, promote public involvement in the recovery planning process, and increase the information available to all involved Federal agencies. We will issue a press release to the appropriate newspapers and publish a notice in the *Federal Register* notifying the public of the availability of a draft recovery plan and opening a formal public comment period. We will, however, accept written comments and information at any time during recovery plan preparation.

## **Need More Information?**

For additional information, contact:

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