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GUIDELINES FOR

RECOVERY PLANS AND TEAMS

(For Endangered and Threatened Species  
Found in United States)

The Endangered Species Act of 1973 makes the Secretary of the Interior the primary National coordinator of endangered and threatened species conservation programs. The Secretary delegated these responsibilities to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Sections 2(c) and 7 of the Act direct all Federal agencies to utilize their authorities to protect and restore endangered and threatened species and their habitats. The importance of State participation and cooperation in restoration programs is noted in Sections 4(b) and 6.

Presently, many organizations including the Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, Soil Conservation Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, Department of Defense, the States, foreign governments and a host of national and international conservation organizations conduct their own endangered and threatened species programs. Many of these programs are not adequately coordinated and are needlessly duplicative. Recovery plans and teams provide a means to combine the varied programs of such organizations into single, effective, efficient concentrated efforts for each species which will eventually lead to qualifying many for removal from lists of endangered or threatened species or relisting from endangered to threatened status. This is always the ultimate goal, although for many, the immediate goal will be to prevent extinction which would otherwise occur very soon. When plan objectives have been met, the recovery team can be abolished and the plan considered terminated. Plans and teams are a "vehicle" to accomplish objectives and are not an end but a beginning to this overall effort.

A recovery plan is a guide containing essential actions which will secure or restore an endangered or threatened species as a viable self-sustaining member of its ecosystem. It is suggested that a typical plan be built around a step-by-step outline of problems or limiting factors contributing to animals' endangered or threatened status which must be overcome. Actions necessary for meeting these factors should be identified, divided into specific assignments, and placed in suggested time frames and priority sequences for handling by those organizations

and individuals participating in the plan's implementation. The approach is basically a problem identification and resolvment procedure. Each plan will be updated as needed to incorporate new facts, techniques, and objectives. There will be no final version of a plan until the plan's prime objective has been met, unless efforts are unsuccessful and the species becomes extinct. The basic objective is to create a situation in which the animal is no longer endangered or threatened by man, and can assume a natural role in its ecosystem with assurance that measures will continue to prevent it from reverting to endangered or threatened status. It is granted there are exceptions with those species which are in such critical condition or reproductive potential so low that present goals must, at best, be confined to reversing downward trends, e.g., red wolf, Puerto Rican parrot and California condor.

#### Recovery Plans :

Although a separate plan for each endangered species and many threatened species is generally contemplated, there are instances where one plan will suffice for a group of endangered or threatened species occupying a common ecosystem or suffering the same or similar problems. There are also instances where it may be advantageous to split a widespread species into populations and provide separate plans for each population.

The length and complexity of each recovery plan will vary in accordance with the complexity of problems facing the species, its geographical distribution and number of organizations involved. A brief plan may be all that is necessary for a program consisting of the simple removal of a threat to a vulnerable species whose population has always been limited and whose status has not yet changed. On the other hand, a rather complex and lengthy plan will be necessary for a widespread species whose status or habitat has deteriorated badly through a combination of factors, and whose recovery will entail numerous actions by many organizations.

Hopefully, a recovery plan that is acceptable to each cooperative agency concerned can result. This may not always be possible because of conflicting interests and responsibilities of the agencies involved. No attempt is, therefore, going to be made to require each cooperating agency to sign plans. Letters of comment and concurrence as to their respective responsibilities will be sought by the Regional Directors from affected or cooperating agencies and placed in the Appendix of the plans before they are submitted to the Director for approval. It is to be acknowledged that agencies cannot commit funds in advance, but they can indicate intent on a basis of anticipated funding.

In recognition of a need for flexibility, a rigid format for recovery plans is not intended. However, some continuity is needed. To achieve this, three parts and an Appendix to each plan are suggested.

Part 1 is introductory and "sets the stage." It contains pertinent background material on the animal's (or animals') habitat requirements, population limiting factors, and past and current distribution, status, and conservation efforts.

Part 2 tells what must be done and how -- by outlining limiting factors followed by measures or actions necessary to meet the factors. This can be stated in terms of objectives and subobjectives.

Part 3 covers implementation. It delineates organizational or agency assignments, priorities, and funding required for the actions described in Part 2. Since plans will be continually updated, Part 3 need not extend past a 3-year period; but must be updated annually to maintain a 3-year assignment and funding schedule.

The Appendix should include substantiating or documentary material as might be required and letters of comment or concurrence on the plan from cooperating and affected agencies and organizations. A statement denoting what a team recommends as constituting "critical habitat" as defined under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act needs to appear in the plan and can be presented here.

#### Recovery Teams:

Groups of three to seven people to be known as recovery teams, will typically play the key role in preparing, coordinating, and implementing plans for species being handled or coordinated by the Fish and Wildlife Service. Exceptions may occur for (1) species of extremely localized distribution which need only habitat protection and (2) species whose needs are so simple that no team is needed. Recovery teams will be formed, at the discretion of a State, for species residing entirely within a state having a cooperative agreement with the Service under Section 6 of the Endangered Species Act. In order to provide adequate coordination, teams are advisable for species which reside in more than one state regardless of whether cooperative



agreements have been consummated. For species residing entirely within a state which has not consummated a cooperative agreement, but has indicated an intent to restore and handle the species on their own, it may also be determined no Service appointed team is needed.

Every possible effort will be extended to encourage the States to handle resident endangered species on their own. In situations where Service appointed teams are used, they will be selected according to: (1) agency or organization responsibilities for the species and authority to speak for that agency or organization; (2) expertise with respect to the species; (3) current personal involvement with the species. Ordinarily, they will consist of agency employees, but may also include professionals from academia or conservation organizations which are actively engaged in research or management efforts on the subject species. Recovery teams will thus consist of on-the-ground professionals who carry the greatest responsibilities and expertise with respect to the animal concerned. One member of each team will serve as team leader. Teams may also include consultants who offer special expertise; but have no responsibilities with respect to the species. In addition, they may include observers from interested conservation organizations. Consultants and observers will be in addition to the three to seven members.

In most cases, recovery team leaders, members, and consultants will be nominated by Regional Directors in consultation with the States, other cooperating organizations and the Office of Endangered Species. Exceptions to this may occur for: (1) species of international distribution and concern, or, as stated above, (2) species which are handled entirely by States through cooperative agreements consummated under Section 6(c) of the Endangered Species Act.

For Service appointed teams, public announcements on the final selection of a recovery team leader, members and consultants will be made by the Director. A joint simultaneous announcement of a recovery team selection by the Director and a State wildlife agency director can be provided for, where appropriate and requested. This will be especially appropriate for species for which States play important roles in cooperation with the Service.

Teams will meet as frequently as necessary for matters such as plan revisions and program revisions. Presumably, one scheduled annual meeting will be essential for this purpose and to prepare budget estimates. It is recognized that much of the business of a team will take place within the content of recovery plans but supported by written communication and dialogue among members. It should not be overlooked that the best team decisions may be made

with members interacting in person, and that meetings, on a regular or called basis, are a means to accomplish this.

It is expected there will be representatives from conservation organizations or interested citizens who will want their views considered or whose views will be sought by a team. Such persons may be designated as observers by a team leader and should be notified of meetings as required. Teams should welcome such participation, as it will avoid misunderstandings with conservation or other organizations and enable such groups to relate to plans and help support them. Observers should, however, meet their own expenses.

Responsibilities and Implementation for Species Not Handled Exclusively by a State Under a Cooperative Agreement:

The Director and his staff, through memoranda and program advices, will assign to appropriate Regional Directors the task of nominating recovery teams and consultants and overseeing the preparation and implementation of recovery plans. Species selections made by the Director's staff will be in accordance with animal distribution, priorities, and available funds. Regional staffs will be consulted on this. Two or more regions which share a species in common will have to work closely, but in such cases, one region will be assigned as the lead region. The Director and his staff will also establish schedules denoting due dates for nomination of teams, submission of plans, progress reports, and budget estimates.

The Director will maintain overall guidance of the recovery team effort through final selection of teams and replacements, removal of team members, approval of plans and major changes, program advices and an evaluation team. This team, comprised of Service people, will make field inspections, review progress being made on each species and recommend changes in plans and teams.

Although salary, per diem, and travel costs associated with recovery team activities will normally be borne by the members' employing agencies, expenses of the team as a whole will be borne by the Regional Director. Travel expenses of consultants on team business, printing costs and other special services are examples of such expenses. Endangered species program funds for meeting team expenses and travel of Fish and Wildlife Service participants will be identified and allocated to Regional Directors in program advices.

In summary, duties of Regional Directors, recovery teams, and other parties are as follows.

Regional Directors will:

1. Take emergency action before selection of a team, if required.
2. In consultation with Office of Endangered Species, States and/or key organizations nominate recovery team, the team leader, consultants -- if needs arise, and replacements as needed that will occur through transfers, resignations, unsatisfactory service, etc.
3. Assist recovery team by providing technical service, counsel, funding, and other assistance as needed to expedite preparation of the plan.
4. Review recovery team's plan -- recommend changes or accept.
5. Submit plan to cooperators requesting comment and concurrence.
6. If satisfactory, submit plan to Washington office with cooperators' concurrence and comments attached.
7. Assist in carrying out operational programs.
8. Review and act on major changes in plan using steps 2 - 6 above.
9. Allot Service funds in accordance with plan.

Recovery teams will take into account any previous plans, current efforts, and:

1. Act on emergencies even before preparation or acceptance of a plan.
2. Prepare, refine, and maintain a recovery plan utilizing their expertise, Office of Endangered Species and International Activities briefings,



counsel and reviews from all informed and participating parties, including the State or States involved, and submit the plan to the appropriate Regional Director. A team can go outside its group in selecting an individual to draft a plan, but normally an individual or individuals who are on the team will prepare the plan.

3. Carry out implementation of the plan through responsible agencies.
4. Keep the plan current through revisions as required.
5. Recommend to the Regional Director major changes in the plan. Minor changes will be a team responsibility.
6. Keep all cooperating parties informed of amendments to or changes in the plan.
7. Review and coordinate progress being made by all cooperating parties.
8. Report to all cooperating parties annually (more often, if necessary or requested) emergencies, problems, needs, progress, etc.
9. Submit annually, at a time designated by the Regional Director, to conform to Service and cooperators budget submission schedules, and an update of Part 3 of the plan for budgeting purposes.
10. Be represented at agency, interagency, or other meetings on the species concerned.

The Director and his Washington office staff will:

1. Develop, circulate, and maintain schedules for drafting and processing plans.
2. Provide guidelines and training aids through written materials and workshops on methods for drafting plans.
3. Announce selections and replacements for recovery teams.

4. Review, accept, or return for changes, plans and major changes in plans to Regional Director.
5. Allocate funds through program advices.
6. Develop and maintain an evaluation team that will make field inspections, oversee implementation of plans and recommend changes, including composition of teams.

States and other cooperators should:

1. Provide key leadership through membership on recovery teams.
2. Provide counsel throughout plan development and implementation.
3. Review and comment on plans.
4. Be principal implementors of plans for most resident species.

This discussion of recovery plan procedures is preliminary. Experience will show need for modifications to fit the wide variation in circumstances surrounding each endangered and threatened species. As cooperative agreements are formulated with the States, we can also anticipate possible procedural changes.



# RECOVERY PROGRAM ORGANIZATION

DIRECTOR

1. Makes Species selection
2. Makes public announcement of Recovery team selections
3. Approves Recovery plans

Program Manager, Fed. Asst.

1. Recommends species selections
2. Provides program guidance
3. Reviews Recovery plans
4. Allocates Funds
5. Recommends Recovery Team selections to Director

Office of Endangered Species

1. Recommends species
2. Review plans annually
3. Assist in selection of Recovery teams
4. Coordination
5. Develop, maintain and operate field evaluation teams
6. Consolidates programs

REGIONAL DIRECTORS

1. Take emergency action
2. Nominates Recovery Team with assistance of cooperators
3. Assists Teams (Support functions)
4. Annual Review of plans
5. Coordinates with Cooperators
6. Acts on plan

Species managed by States under cooperative agreement

1. Appoint Recovery teams if required
2. Announce Recovery Team selections
3. Develop and implement Recovery plans

Recovery Teams (Leader & 2-6 members)

1. Acts on emergencies
2. Prepares, submits and maintains plans
3. Implements plans through agencies
4. Coordinates plans through agencies
5. Submits annual reports and Program proposals

Consultants

1. offer professional expertise

Observers

1. Public liaison with conservation organizations

State Agencies

1. Assist in selection of Teams
2. Provide leadership through Team membership
3. Review comment and concur on plan
4. Participate in public Announcement of Recovery team selection
5. Provide consultation
6. Assist in plan implementation

Federal Agencies

1. Assist in selection of team
2. Provide leadership through team membership
3. Review, comment and concur on plan
4. Provide consultation
5. Assist in plan implementation

Academic or Conservation Group Professionals

1. Provide leadership through team membership
2. Provide consultation
3. Review and comment on plans

