



Strategy for the Cooperative Recovery of Rare Species Affecting Training Ranges

06-213

Background: Natural habitats form some of the most realistic and sustainable training areas on Dept. of Defense lands. These areas are also some of the best remaining habitat for rare and endangered species. Four species that occur on the grasslands of Fort Lewis and McChord Airforce Base are Federal Candidates for listing under the Endangered Species Act of 1973. Were any of these species listed, significant training restrictions could be imposed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. These restrictions could even put military missions in jeopardy.



Federal candidate species occurring on grasslands of Fort Lewis and McChord AirForce Base. Clockwise from top left: Taylor's checkerspot, mardon skipper, Mazama pocket gopher, streaked horned lark.

Objective: The project's primary objective is to preclude the need for listing under the ESA of the Federal Candidate species that occur on the grasslands of Fort Lewis and McChord Airforce Base. The project promotes cooperative ecoregional recovery of these rare species throughout their range in order to share the burden of species recovery over a variety of partners and locations. The project moves beyond geographic and political boundaries to engage and work with all organizations and individuals who will assist in the recovery process. This cooperative strategy results in effective and efficient recovery with the greatest possibilities of success while accommodating military training and operations. The Legacy Program, Ft. Lewis, and USFWS have funded this effort.

Summary of Approach: The project works under a three-tiered framework. The primary components of the strategy are information transfer, linking of entities, and providing incentives. Efficient information transfer ensures that all partners utilize the best available practices for restoration and recovery actions. The formal and informal linking of entities is important to facilitate production and implementation of regional goals, define roles, and to share resources. The final component of the

strategy is to provide incentives. The project enhances financial incentives by raising awareness and helping to direct funds towards implementing identified priority actions. Non-financial incentives, such as technical and on-the-ground assistance, are also key to guiding and promoting recovery actions.

Benefit: The regulatory burden of endangered species on training lands is an imminent threat to Fort Lewis and McChord Airforce Base. Cooperative, range-wide, ecoregional recovery of these species may be the best strategy to reduce the potential for ESA listing. The ecoregional focus directs efforts throughout the ecological range of the target species, thereby shifting the focus from only the few remaining populations on DoD lands and sharing the recovery burden with partners. With conservation success, listings could be avoided and training flexibility maintained

Accomplishments: The project is in its third of four years. The first two years focused collaborative efforts on the South Puget Sound Region, the area containing Fort Lewis and McChord Airforce Base. In the third year, the project was expanded into the North Puget Sound, an identified priority area. The project has demonstrated dramatic success in both regions. Awareness of rare species needs is significantly increased, available funding for candidate species recovery actions is enhanced, and partners are working together beyond bureaucratic boundaries at unprecedented levels sharing ideas, scientific expertise, and best management practices. Cooperatively created range-wide conservation action strategies for each species have been completed as well as a final polished draft of the Candidate Conservation Agreement. Species-specific workshops have successfully brought together players throughout the eco-region to identify obstacles and potential actions for recovery. Our actions have also resulted in concrete benefits to the species on the ground including successful reintroduction of captive reared butterflies, and successful translocation of Mazama pocket gophers.

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