

# News Release



Office of Public Affairs  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20240  
202/208 5634 Fax: 202/219 2428

September 26, 2006

Contact: Valerie Fellows 202.208.5634

## **SECRETARY KEMPTHORNE ANNOUNCES \$67 MILLION IN GRANTS TO SUPPORT LAND ACQUISITION AND CONSERVATION PLANNING FOR ENDANGERED SPECIES**

Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne today announced more than \$67 million in grants to 27 states to support conservation planning and acquisition of vital habitat for threatened and endangered fish, wildlife and plants. The grants, awarded through the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund, will benefit species ranging from orchids to bull trout that are found across the United States.

“These grants are incredibly important tools to conserve threatened and endangered species,” said Secretary of Interior Dirk Kempthorne. “Our ability to successfully conserve habitat for imperiled species depends on long-term partnerships and voluntary landowner participation. These grants provide the means for States to work with landowners and communities to conserve habitat and foster conservation stewardship efforts for future generations.”

Authorized by Section 6 of the Endangered Species Act, the grants enable States to work with private landowners, conservation groups and other agencies to initiate conservation planning efforts and acquire and protect habitat to support the conservation of threatened and endangered species.

The cooperative endangered species fund this year provides \$7.5 million through the Habitat Conservation Planning Assistance Grants Program, \$46 million through the Habitat Conservation Plan Land Acquisition Grants Program and \$13.9 million through the Recovery Land Acquisition Grants Program. The three programs were established to help reduce potential conflicts between the conservation of threatened and endangered species and land development and use.

Under the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) Land Acquisition Program, the Service provides grants to States or Territories for land acquisition associated with approved HCPs. The grants are targeted to help landowners who want to undertake proactive conservation work on their lands to conserve imperiled species. HCPs are agreements between a landowner and the Service, allowing a landowner to undertake otherwise lawful activities on their property that may result in the death, injury or harassment of a listed species, when that landowner agrees to conservation measures designed to minimize and mitigate the impact of those actions. HCPs may also be developed by a county or state to cover certain activities of all landowners within their own jurisdiction and may address multiple species. There are more than 650 HCPs currently in effect covering 600 separate species on approximately 41 million acres.

Among recipients of today's HCP Land Acquisition grants is the state of California, receiving a \$12 million grant to purchase habitat to support the Western Riverside County Multi-species HCP. This grant will permanently protect habitat for 18 federally listed species on 578 acres in Riverside County. By purchasing 450 acres of land in the San Jacinto River area, several core populations of federally listed plants, including spreading navarretia, San Jacinto Valley crowscale, thread-leaved brodiaea, and slender-horned spineflower will be conserved. In addition, the grant will conserve lands along the San Jacinto River, protecting one of three major populations of the federally endangered San Bernardino kangaroo rat. The funds will also be used to purchase 128 acres of land in the Santa Rosa Plateau area to protect one of the most ecologically significant complexes of vernal pools in southern California that supports populations of the Riverside fairy shrimp. Other species that will benefit from acquisition of these lands include least Bell's vireo, the coastal California gnatcatcher, California Orcutt grass and Munz's onion.

The HCP Planning Assistance Program provides grants to States and Territories to support the development of HCPs through funding of baseline surveys and inventories, document preparation, outreach, and similar planning activities. In Montana a \$574,334 grant will enable the Montana Department of Natural Resources to complete an HCP that covers half a million acres of state lands across 25 counties in northwestern Montana. This HCP will ultimately protect five federally listed species and two state sensitive species: Canada lynx, grizzly bears, bull trout, bald eagles, gray wolves, westslope cutthroat trout and Columbia River redband trout. This project will set a statewide precedent for balancing forest practices and public land management with species conservation. The overall conservation strategy will emphasize forest management practices that maintain healthy ecosystems, promote biodiversity, and protect important ecological features across all HCP-covered lands.

The Recovery Land Acquisition Grants Program provides funds to states and territories to acquire habitat for endangered and threatened species with approved recovery plans. Habitat acquisition to secure long term protection is often an essential element of a comprehensive recovery effort for a listed species. One of this year's grants will provide \$1,794,500 to preserve 3,148 acres in the South Kona District of the Island of Hawaii located within a core region identified for enhancing wildlife conservation in the Hawaii Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy. The acquisitions provide a unique opportunity to increase existing efforts to protect and manage rare forest habitats that support threatened and endangered species. The species benefiting from the grant include several Hawaii forest birds: the 'akepa, 'akiopo'a'au, and Hawaii creeper. It is also within the range of the alala (Hawaiian crow) and io (Hawaiian hawk).

For a complete list of the 2006 grant awards for these programs (Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number 15.615), see the Service's Endangered Species Grants home page at <http://endangered.fws.gov/grants/section6/index.html>.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System which encompasses 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 63 fishery resource offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores

wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

**-FWS-**