



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR BUREAU OF LAND
MANAGEMENT

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CHAPTER 1. OVERVIEW

1.1 Purpose

This manual revises Manual 6840 Rel. 6-125 (December 12, 2008) to provide increased clarity on the policy of the agency toward the proactive conservation and recovery of special status species. This manual revision sets forth the objectives, authorities, responsibilities, and policies for Bureau of Land Management (BLM) stewardship of special status species (fish, wildlife, and plants) and their habitats.

Special status species include native species that are any of the following (refer to section 2.1A for special status species criteria):

- Species identified as listed, candidate,¹ or proposed for listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531–1544) by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) or National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS).
- Delisted species (minimum 5 years post-delisting or throughout the post-delisting monitoring period, whichever is longer (ESA, section 4(g)).
- BLM sensitive species.

The BLM has substantial opportunity to effect positive change for special status species given the vast acres of public lands that provide diverse habitats. The BLM managed lands provide habitat for more than 330 threatened, endangered, candidate, and proposed species and 2,600 sensitive species (as of 2024; refer to Glossary for definitions).

1.2 Objectives

This policy establishes an agencywide emphasis on proactive, landscape- and ecosystem-level, scientifically informed conservation and recovery of special status species and their habitats. The policy includes direction for the following objectives:

- A. Focus on Proactive Conservation and Recovery for Special Status Species
Implement ESA section 7(a)(1) by proactively collaborating across all levels of the agency and with partners to develop and implement effective conservation and recovery efforts for special status species.
- B. Use ESA Section 7(a)(2) Consultation to Support Conservation and Recovery
Comply with ESA section 7(a)(2) consultation regulations and incorporate proactive recovery efforts into proposed actions.
- C. Promote Healthy Species Populations and Biodiversity through Landscape- and Ecosystem-Level Management

¹ The USFWS and NMFS make listing determinations under the Endangered Species Act. These agencies use different definitions for candidate species (refer to Glossary).

Promote ecosystem resilience and landscape intactness, including habitat connectivity; engage with multispecies and multistate conservation efforts; and conserve endemic or localized species.

- D. Use Science and Adaptive Management to Advance Conservation and Recovery
Use science and adaptive management strategies to help ensure the success of conservation and recovery efforts for special status species.
- E. Engage Stakeholders through Internal and External Involvement
Increase outreach and collaboration with internal and external partners to increase support and effectiveness of conservation and recovery efforts for special status species.

1.3 Authority

- A. Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act of 1940 (16 U.S.C. 668-668d), as amended. Prohibits anyone, without a permit issued by the Secretary of the Interior, from “taking” (i.e., pursue, shoot, shoot at, poison, wound, kill, capture, trap, collect, molest, or disturb) bald or golden eagles, including their parts, nests, or eggs.
- B. Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.), as amended. Establishes protections for fish, wildlife, and plants that are listed as threatened or endangered and requires Federal agencies to utilize their authorities to carry out programs for the conservation of endangered and threatened species.
- C. Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.), as amended. Establishes the BLM mission to manage public lands under the principles of multiple use and sustained yield, unless otherwise directed by law.
- D. Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 (16 U.S.C. 1361-1407), as amended. Set forth a national policy to prevent marine mammal species and population stocks from diminishing, because of human activities, beyond the point at which they cease to be significant functioning elements of their ecosystems.
- E. Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (16 U.S.C. 703-712), as amended. Implements four international conservation treaties that the U.S. entered with Canada (1916), Mexico (1936), Japan (1972), and Russia (1976) to help ensure the sustainability of all protected migratory bird species. Prohibits the take (including killing, capturing, selling, trading, and transport) of protected migratory bird species without prior authorization by the DOI.
- F. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321-47). Requires Federal agencies to evaluate the environmental effects of any major Federal action that may significantly affect the quality of the human environment.

- G. Sikes Act of 1960 (16 U.S.C. 670 g-h), as amended. Authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to cooperate with state agencies through comprehensive plans for the conservation and rehabilitation of fish, wildlife, and game.

1.4 Responsibility

- A. The **Director and Deputy Directors** are responsible for overseeing and leading the implementation of this policy.
- B. The **Assistant Director for Resources and Planning** is responsible for:
1. Providing policies, priorities, and guidance to effectively implement this policy across the BLM in coordination with State Directors and BLM directorates.
 2. Coordinating with Federal and state agencies (including state fish and wildlife agencies and natural heritage programs); Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations; nongovernmental, national, and international organizations; and other partners to implement this policy.
 3. Providing appropriate resources including staffing and funding to BLM directorates, state offices, and centers to enable consistent and timely implementation of this policy.
 4. Reviewing and approving the final national special status species list (refer to section 2.1 for compilation of the special status species list).
- C. The **Division Chief and Deputy Division Chief for Wildlife Conservation, Aquatics, and Environmental Protection** are responsible for:
1. Developing, approving, and implementing special status species and habitat management policies, priorities, and guidance.
 2. Collaborating with other BLM divisions, programs, state offices, and centers to implement this policy.
 3. Coordinating, as appropriate, with Federal and state agencies (including state fish and wildlife agencies and natural heritage programs); Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations; nongovernmental, national, and international organizations; and other partners to effectively implement this policy on BLM-administered lands and across jurisdictional boundaries.
- D. Other **Division Chiefs and Deputy Division Chiefs** are responsible for:
1. Promoting collaboration of the purpose and objectives of this policy with all BLM program areas at the national, division, and branch levels, as allowable by law.

2. Incorporating this policy into BLM program areas to assist with effective conservation and recovery of special status species and habitats where appropriate.

E. The **National Threatened and Endangered Species Program Lead** is responsible for:

1. Developing and maintaining up-to-date policies, priorities, technical expertise, and guidance for the Threatened and Endangered Species (T&E) Program at a national level.
2. Overseeing budget planning, guidance, execution, and monitoring of expenditures and accomplishments.
3. Collaborating on priorities for proactive conservation and recovery efforts with the T&E, Wildlife, Sage-Grouse Conservation, Aquatic Resources, and Plant Conservation and Restoration Programs which share lead responsibilities for BLM sensitive species.
4. Coordinating with other BLM divisions and programs to promote and support the integration of proactive conservation and recovery for special status species and habitat with the BLM multiple use mission.
5. Coordinating with Federal and state agencies (including state fish and wildlife agencies and natural heritage programs); Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations; nongovernmental, national, and international organizations; and other partners, as appropriate, to implement this policy.
6. Compiling the national list of special status species in collaboration with program leads at the state and headquarters levels for Wildlife, Sage-Grouse Conservation, Aquatic Resources, and Plant Conservation and Restoration Programs (Refer to section 2.1 for the BLM special status species list).

F. The **National Operations Center Director** is responsible for:

1. Providing technical support (e.g., analysis, data management, technology development), expertise, and guidance across the BLM and with relevant partner agencies to implement this policy.
2. Assisting with tracking T&E expenditures and delivery of expenditure data to the USFWS annually.
3. Preparing, reviewing, and evaluating BLM technical references, user guides, technical notes, instruction memoranda, and other documents on topics related to special status species.

G. The **National Training Center Director** is responsible for:

1. Developing and delivering introductory and advanced training for BLM managers and staff in ESA and other special status species policies.
2. Coordinating ESA and other special status species training with partners to maximize efficiency and reduce duplication.

H. The **State Directors** are responsible for:

1. Leading state efforts to implement this policy so that its purpose and objectives are met.
2. Ensuring compliance with the ESA and other applicable laws and implementing regulations related to the protection, conservation, and recovery of special status species and their habitats.
3. Promoting and supporting proactive conservation and recovery efforts for special status species and their habitats.
4. Coordinating special status species conservation and recovery actions and projects across jurisdictional boundaries to help advance special status species conservation and recovery.
5. Establishing and maintaining an interdisciplinary workforce, including designating T&E state office program leads, that provide expertise regarding implementation of this policy at the state, district, and field office levels.
6. Ensuring that land use plans and implementation-level plans identify appropriate outcomes, strategies, restoration opportunities, use restrictions, and management actions necessary to conserve and recover special status species.
7. Allocating funding to best achieve the objectives of this policy and ensuring allocated funds are appropriately expended.

I. The **Threatened and Endangered Species State Office Program Leads** are responsible for:

1. Coordinating and leading implementation of the policies, priorities, and planning of special status species management with state office leadership; other BLM program leads; district and field staff; other T&E state office program leads; Federal and state agencies (including state fish and wildlife agencies and natural heritage programs); Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations; nongovernmental, national, and international organizations; and other partners.

2. Recommending allocation of resources to priority species, habitats, and geographic areas as appropriate to maximize conservation and recovery successes (see section 2.2 for species prioritization).
 3. Coordinating and monitoring special status species budgeting efforts and expenditures and recommending funding allocations to state office leadership and district and field offices.
 4. Conducting periodic T&E Program reviews as needed to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of staffing levels, staff expertise, budget, training, and other resources to meet program policies and priorities.
 5. Developing and implementing proactive conservation and recovery efforts to provide habitat for sustainable and improving populations of special status species, thereby assisting in recovery of ESA-listed species or precluding the need to list sensitive species.
 6. Participating on USFWS and NMFS recovery teams and coordinating with partners within and across jurisdictional boundaries to develop and implement recovery plans and actions for federally listed endangered and threatened species and conservation agreements/strategies for BLM sensitive species.
 7. Communicating internally and externally on the priorities of the T&E Program and the value of BLM-managed lands to special status species.
 8. Responding to data calls and requests for information from BLM Headquarters in a timely manner with high-quality products.
 9. Under direction from the State Director, and in collaboration with state office program leads for Wildlife, Sage-Grouse Conservation, Aquatic Resources, and Plant Conservation and Restoration Programs, identify a draft special status species list at the state level (Refer to section 2.1 for additional information on the BLM special status species list).
- J. The **Line Officers, including District Managers and Field Managers**, are responsible for:
1. Complying with the ESA and its implementing regulations and other laws, regulations, policies, and procedures.
 2. Developing and implementing an interdisciplinary district or field office program of work to enable consistent and effective implementation of this policy.
 3. Supporting periodic evaluations of T&E Program implementation and efficacy.

4. Assigning staff with appropriate expertise in areas such as wildlife, fisheries, aquatics, botany, and ecology to implement this policy.
5. Coordinating with district and field offices; Federal and state agencies (including state fish and wildlife agencies and natural heritage programs); Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations; nongovernmental, national, and international organizations; and other partners to implement this policy.
6. Supporting field staff in the development and implementation of proactive conservation and recovery efforts to achieve sustainable and improving populations and habitats, thereby assisting in recovery of ESA-listed species or precluding the need to list sensitive species.
7. Working with the T&E state office program leads and field office staff to implement recovery plans and conservation agreements/strategies through land use planning and implementation-level activity plans. Where there are no approved recovery plans or conservation agreements/strategies, implement land use authorizations as appropriate to create, maintain, or improve sustainable populations and habitats.
8. Ensuring that implementation-level activity plans and land use authorizations protect and restore special status species and their habitats through terms and conditions, or necessary denial of discretionary action applications that may impact special status species, in accordance with the approved land use management plan.
9. Supporting field staff efforts to respond to data calls and requests for information from BLM Headquarters in a timely manner with high-quality products.

K. Field Resource Specialists are responsible for:

1. Developing and implementing proactive conservation and recovery efforts, with an emphasis on priority special status species and their habitats (refer to section 2.2 for species prioritization).
2. Collaborating with partners as appropriate to ensure the success of landscape or ecosystem level conservation and recovery efforts for special status species.
3. Identifying and prioritizing inventories and monitoring where they directly contribute to the implementation of on-the-ground conservation efforts (refer to section 1.7A.8 for description of on-the-ground conservation).
4. Reporting, at least annually, all species occurrence data records generated on BLM-managed land by BLM staff, contractors, or volunteers, including relevant geospatial information on location, to the species management agency (e.g., state fish and wildlife agencies, state natural heritage programs, USFWS, NMFS).

1.5 References

- A. 40 CFR 1508.20—Mitigation.
- B. 43 CFR Parts 6100 – Ecosystem Resilience.
- C. 50 CFR Part 17—Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants.
- D. 50 CFR Part 226—Designated Critical Habitat.
- E. 50 CFR Part 402—Interagency Cooperation—Endangered Species Act of 1973, as Amended.
- F. 50 CFR Part 424—Listing Endangered and Threatened Species and Designating Critical Habitat.
- G. 84 FR 44976 (August 27, 2019)—Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Regulations for Interagency Cooperation.
- H. Departmental Manual, Adaptive Management Implementation Policy, Chapter 1 (522 DM 1).
- I. BLM—Conserving and Restoring Riparian, Fisheries, and Water Resources in a Changing Climate: A 5-Year Strategy for the BLM’s Aquatic Resources Program, January 2022 (or as revised).
- J. BLM—Strategic Plan for Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, April 2022 (or as revised).
- K. BLM—Strategic Plan for Pollinator Conservation, June 2022 (or as revised).
- L. BLM—Threatened and Endangered Species Program’s Strategic Plan for Special Status Species Conservation and Recovery, September 2022 (or as revised).
- M. Plant Conservation Alliance—National Seed Strategy for Rehabilitation and Restoration, 2015-2020 (or as revised).
- N. Seeds of Success—Bureau of Land Management Technical Protocol for the Collection, Study, and Conservation of Seeds from Native Plant Species for Seeds of Success (Updated March 2023) (or as revised).
- O. BLM Manual Section MS-1745—Introduction, Transplant, Augmentation, and Reestablishment of Fish, Wildlife, and Plants.
- P. BLM Manual Section MS-1794—Mitigation Manual.

- Q. BLM Manual Section MS-6500—Wildlife and Fisheries Management.
- R. BLM Manual Section MS-6600— Fish, Wildlife, and Special Status Plant Resources Inventory and Monitoring.
- S. BLM Manual Section MS-6720—Aquatic Resource Management.
- T. BLM Manual Section MS-6780—Habitat Management Plans.
- U. BLM Handbook H-1601-1—Land Use Planning Handbook.
- V. BLM Handbook H-1684-1—Fund Code Handbook.
- W. BLM Handbook H-1794-1—Mitigation.
- X. BLM Handbook H-1740-2—Integrated Vegetation Management Handbook.
- Y. BLM Handbook H-1790-1—National Environmental Policy Act Handbook.
- Z. USFWS and NMFS Endangered Species Consultation Handbook, March 1998 (or as revised).

1.6 Policy

The BLM policy for the management of special status species and their habitats is organized according to the objectives described in section 1.2. The objectives are interrelated and must be considered together to effectively conserve and recover (refer to Glossary) special status species and their habitats.

A. Focus on Proactive Conservation and Recovery for Special Status Species

ESA section 7(a)(1) directs all Federal agencies to use their authorities to carry out “programs” to conserve threatened and endangered species. ESA section 7(a)(1) is generally regarded as the provision for proactive conservation and recovery efforts by Federal agencies. Through this policy, the BLM exercises discretion under ESA section 7(a)(1) to promote and prioritize proactive recovery efforts for threatened and endangered species across all BLM programs, as consistent with applicable laws and regulations. Additionally, the BLM, as a matter of policy, exercises discretion to emphasize proactive conservation for BLM sensitive species to help ensure these species do not need to be listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA. Thus, as a matter of policy, the BLM endeavors to apply the proactive coordination and recovery measures to all BLM special status species, not only species listed under the ESA.

Proactive conservation and recovery means that the agency, at all levels and across all BLM programs as allowable by law, is actively engaged in protecting, restoring, and improving special status species populations and habitats. BLM engagement may occur

through the development and implementation of regulations, policies, procedures, and landscape- and ecosystem-level plans or strategies. Plans and actions can be initiated with the intent to make a positive change (e.g., recovery, precluding the need to list a species), prepare for a situation (e.g., climate change), or prevent something from happening (e.g., loss of habitat or biodiversity).

Proactive conservation and recovery measures can be adapted from existing species recovery plans, conservation agreements/strategies, available high-quality information including Indigenous Knowledge, and biological and botanical expertise. Coordinating the development of proactive conservation and recovery measures with the USFWS, NMFS, state fish and wildlife agencies, Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations, and other partners, while not required under the ESA, can result in greater buy-in, more effective conservation, and streamlined regulatory processes. For example, section 7(a)(2) consultation, land use planning, and NEPA processes can become more efficient because they connect back to conservation measures that are already agreed to by FWS or NMFS (refer to section 1.6B for section 7(a)(2) consultation and Chapter 3 for NEPA policy guidance). Up-front programmatic consultations may have a large streamlining effect in expediting, and in some cases eliminating, project-specific section 7(a)(2) consultations for multiple future projects. Project proponents also benefit from up-front knowledge of commitments they will need to include in future proposals or applications. Proactive conservation and recovery efforts may also help reduce the number of species listed under the ESA, thereby reducing overall regulatory requirements.

This policy emphasizes proactive conservation and recovery for special status species consistent with applicable laws and regulations, as follows:

1. Identify, develop, and implement goals and objectives that prioritize and integrate proactive conservation and recovery efforts across all BLM program areas.
2. Coordinate across state, district, and field office jurisdictions to ensure proactive conservation and recovery special status species and their habitats at landscape- and ecosystem-levels.
3. Use agency authorities and collaborate across BLM programs and with USFWS, NMFS, state fish and wildlife agencies, Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations, and other partners as appropriate to develop and implement proactive conservation and recovery efforts for special status species and their habitats.
4. Promote opportunities to conserve and manage landscapes and ecosystems to improve the health of special status species habitats and ensure ecosystem resilience.
5. Restore and protect habitats as needed to support the conservation and recovery of special status species.

6. Develop and implement agency land use plans, implementation plans, and actions in a manner consistent with conservation and recovery of special status species (refer to Chapter 3 for additional planning and implementation policy).
7. Integrate the fundamentals of land health and related standards and guidelines through the land use planning process to promote restoration and management of native habitats, improved biodiversity, resilient ecosystems, landscape intactness including habitat connectivity, and special status species conservation and recovery (refer to Chapter 3 for additional planning and implementation policy).
8. Establish and participate in recovery teams and working groups to achieve conservation and recovery of special status species.
 - i. Coordinate with partners to develop and implement cooperative actions or plans in furtherance of the conservation of listed species pursuant to ESA section 7(a)(1).
 - ii. Implement goals and recommended actions from USFWS and NMFS recovery plans as appropriate.
 - iii. Conduct surveys, monitoring, and research and use available high-quality information to inform and implement recovery plans or conservation agreements/strategies.
7. Prioritize on-the-ground protection and restoration efforts that substantially improve conservation and recovery of special status species. On-the-ground projects include habitat restoration, native seed collection and propagation, disease control, invasive species control, translocations, and population reestablishment.
8. Prioritize science-related activities such as research, inventory, monitoring, and habitat modeling for immediately informing on-the-ground conservation projects or identifying important habitats for protection such as seasonal use areas, movement corridors, and ecological refugia.
9. Implement the “National Seed Strategy for Rehabilitation and Restoration” (and subsequent updates) to restore native ecosystems.
10. Support experimental populations or translocation of special status species on BLM-managed lands, in coordination with appropriate Federal and state agencies, Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations, and other partners, when such establishment is consistent with land use plans and policy and benefits conservation and recovery efforts (BLM MS-1745).

11. Identify and geospatially track conservation and recovery activities using standardized methodologies and databases where available.
12. Increase efforts to evaluate and manage multistate and cross-jurisdictional special status species and habitats as follows:
 - i. Coordinate across jurisdictional boundaries (e.g., between field, district, and state offices, and other land ownerships) to prioritize species or geographies to help focus conservation and recovery efforts (refer to section 2.2 for how to prioritize).
 - ii. Coordinate land use planning efforts to facilitate proactive conservation for special status species across state boundaries and land management jurisdictions (refer to Chapter 3 for additional planning and implementation policy).
 - iii. Protect and manage special status species habitats for intactness and habitat connectivity to ensure long-term ecosystem resilience, especially with regard to climate change.

B. Use ESA Section 7(a)(2) Consultation to Support Conservation and Recovery

This policy directs compliance with ESA section 7(a)(2) and implementing regulations at 50 CFR 402 for consultation and conferencing on federally listed or proposed species and critical habitats. This policy also emphasizes integrating ESA section 7(a)(1) into the 7(a)(2) process to help streamline the consultation process. Although not required under the ESA, streamlining may occur when there is an upfront agreement with the USFWS or NMFS on appropriate conservation measures for proposed actions. The policy for ESA section 7(a)(2) consultation, as consistent with applicable laws and regulations, is as follows, and implementation guidance is found on the BLM Science in Practice Portal:

1. Follow ESA section 7(a)(2) regulations and applicable guidance provided by the USFWS and NMFS (refer to sections 1.3, Authority, and 1.5, References).
2. Provide field staff, line officers, and managers who work with threatened, endangered, proposed, and candidate species training in ESA section 7(a)(2) requirements and implementation. ESA section 7(a)(2) trainings are available internally with the BLM and through the USFWS National Conservation Training Center.
3. Coordinate with the USFWS, NMFS, state fish and wildlife agencies, and other partners early during the planning phase of activities to develop measures that help with the recovery of species, consistent with our general conservation obligations under ESA Section 7(a)(1). These proactive measures could be incorporated into BLM's proposed actions that are subject to ESA Section 7(a)(2).

4. Complete national or regional programmatic or batched ESA section 7(a)(2) consultations and conferences that address large project areas or wide-ranging species where feasible.
 - i. Incorporate analyses from large scale ESA section 7(a)(2) consultations or conferences by reference where feasible to streamline regulatory compliance project-specific levels where appropriate.
 - ii. Engage with other Federal agencies on actions affecting the same species or critical habitat to determine whether there are opportunities to share analyses and streamline consultations.
5. Coordinate the development of new or novel approaches for ESA section 7(a)(2) consultation across T&E Program staff at headquarters, state, district, and field office levels.
6. Use benefitting subactivities or cost recovery funding to support surveys and monitoring when associated with land use authorizations, including compliance with ESA section 7(a)(2) consultations and NEPA.

C. Promote Healthy Species Populations and Biodiversity through Landscape- and Ecosystem-Level Management

This policy emphasizes landscape- and ecosystem-level conservation, including landscape intactness and habitat connectivity, as priorities to effectively protect and restore the habitats on which special status species depend, as follows:

1. Engage in coordinated reviews across BLM state, district, and field levels and jurisdictional boundaries to identify conservation and recovery strategies at landscape- and ecosystem-levels that may preclude the need to list sensitive species under the ESA or help lead to delisting threatened or endangered species.
2. Work with partners to assess data regarding landscape intactness including habitat connectivity, permeability, and ecosystem resilience.
 - i. Identify where to focus protection, restoration, reclamation, and management efforts that support priority special status species within and across jurisdictional boundaries (refer to section 2.2 for prioritizing special status species).
 - ii. Emphasize multispecies, multistate, and international conservation and recovery efforts where appropriate.
 - iii. Support the identification, protection, and restoration of unique habitats for special status species, including rare or limited habitat types (e.g.,

caves, springs, seeps, riparian areas, wetlands, aspen stands, old-growth forests).

3. Protect, restore, and improve habitat conditions and intact landscapes (including habitat connectivity) to support special status species and their habitats, including but not limited to, seasonal use areas, migratory stopover sites, and movement corridors, with consideration of changing climate conditions.
4. Leverage land use designations to protect and manage intact landscapes and native habitats (e.g., areas of critical environmental concern, backcountry conservation areas, habitat management areas, research natural areas, areas of habitat connectivity, National Wild and Scenic Rivers). Incorporate protection of intact landscapes and native habitats in land use planning.
5. Integrate landscape- and ecosystem-level protection and management as a priority in land use and implementation planning (refer to Chapter 3 for additional planning and implementation policy), with an emphasis on conserving and restoring lands to support special status species populations, landscape intactness including habitat connectivity, biodiversity, and ecosystem resilience.
6. In accordance with Section 302(b) of FLPMA, prevent unnecessary or undue degradation of ecosystems and special status species habitats.

D. Use Science and Adaptive Management to Advance Conservation and Recovery

Use science and adaptive management as tools to proactively conserve and recover special status species and inform management decisions (refer to Chapter 4 for additional policy direction).

E. Engage Stakeholders through Internal and External Involvement

Communicate and collaborate with other BLM programs; Federal and state agencies; Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations; nongovernmental, national, and international organizations; other partners; and the public as appropriate to encourage shared approaches and achievement of special status species conservation and recovery (refer to Chapter 5 for additional policy direction).

1.7 Files and Records Maintenance

Many aspects of the T&E Program pertain to file and records maintenance, which includes data management. Refer to BLM MS-1270, Records Management, and associated manuals for guidance on the creation, maintenance, use, retrieval, access, security, and disposition of records. Within the T&E Program, a large portion of records are related to data. The BLM must ensure that the data it collects, uses, and disseminates relate to the agency's mission requirements, are of known quality, and are applied and used objectively. The T&E Program staff should synthesize collected data in datasets, databases, field reports, or technical reports. All records should be

maintained in the appropriate case file and comply with any applicable BLM corporate data standards. All geospatial data, including maps and geospatial layers, will comply with national geospatial standards and will be compatible with BLM corporate data standards such as those outlined for Assessment, Inventory, and Monitoring (AIM); Proper Functioning Condition (PFC); or other nationally standardized methods. State-specific data management requirements may also exist and should be followed when applicable. The time necessary to comply with the requirements outlined in this section for files and records maintenance will be budgeted as part of the T&E Program.

CHAPTER 2. BLM SPECIAL STATUS SPECIES LIST AND PRIORITIES

2.1 BLM Special Status Species List

The BLM headquarters T&E Program will work with state offices and coordinate with the headquarters Wildlife, Sage-Grouse Conservation, Aquatic Resources, and Plant Conservation and Restoration Programs to develop a national-level special status species list. The national-level list will allow for a coordinated, agency-wide, and cross-jurisdictional approach for conservation and recovery of special status species.

Under direction from the State Director, the T&E Program state office leads will identify special status species at the state level in draft format. The draft state-identified special status species lists will be reviewed for consistency and combined into a national list by the Division of Wildlife Conservation, Aquatics, and Environmental Protection (HQ-230). Special status species will be reviewed and updated as needed at least every 3 years. More frequent updates may be necessary to address conservation and recovery of declining species or degraded habitats as efficiently and effectively as possible.

BLM special status species include listed, proposed, or candidate species under the ESA; species in an ESA post-delisting monitoring period of five years minimum; and species designated as BLM sensitive. The following criteria provide a transparent and repeatable process that will be used to identify BLM special status species.

A. BLM special status species criteria

1. BLM special status species must be native species.
2. BLM special status species are at least one of the following:
 - i. Found on BLM-administered lands.
 - ii. Likely to occur on BLM-administered land based on habitat characteristics.
 - iii. Have historic or suitable but unoccupied habitat on BLM-administered lands.

3. For species that meet the criteria in section 2.1A1-2, the BLM special status species list will automatically include the following:
 - i. Species listed as endangered, threatened, proposed, or candidate under the ESA (refer to Glossary).
 - ii. Delisted species throughout the post-delisting monitoring period (minimum 5 years or according to the USFWS or NMFS monitoring plan, whichever is longer).
 - iii. BLM sensitive species as described in 2.1B.

B. BLM sensitive species considerations

BLM sensitive species are species that need special management consideration to help avoid future listing under the ESA. Under direction from the State Director, the T&E state office program leads will coordinate with field office biologists and Wildlife, Sage-Grouse Conservation, Aquatic Resources, and Plant Conservation and Restoration state office program leads to review species for BLM sensitive species status, with consideration for but not limited to the following items:

1. Population or habitat considerations may include:
 - i. Species or distinct populations that have or may realize downward population trends or significant habitat loss, and active management intervention is necessary for successful conservation outcomes.
 - ii. Species or populations that depend on ecological or climate refugia or are endemic to specialized or unique habitats on BLM-administered lands, and there is evidence that such areas are threatened with alteration or loss.
 - iii. Species or populations that are groundwater-dependent (e.g., springs) or sensitive to water quality or quantity, where BLM proposed actions may significantly negatively affect these resources.
2. Species for which the USFWS or NMFS made a positive 90-day finding.
3. Species of concern for partners will be considered when evaluating potential sensitive species. Specifically, the BLM will review existing lists and seek input and recommendations from Federal, state (including state fish and wildlife agencies and natural heritage programs), Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations, and other partners as appropriate.

C. Multistate species

For species inhabiting multiple states, the T&E state office program leads, under direction from their respective State Director, shall coordinate with each other in the identification of special status species for consistency across the species' range. For example, if species populations are declining in some areas, it may be prudent to consider including them as special status species on the national list across all states to allow for continued management or monitoring of healthy populations and habitats, intact landscapes, and ecosystem resilience.

2.2 Prioritization of Special Status Species and Geographic Areas

BLM will focus project funding on priority species, habitats, or geographic areas as appropriate to maximize conservation and recovery successes. Prioritization of conservation and recovery efforts for special status species, habitats, or geographic areas is important so that (1) available resources are targeted to species and habitats that will most benefit from immediate conservation and (2) meaningful conservation and recovery efforts can be completed that result in substantial improvements to habitat conditions and species status. The prioritization process is intended to help biologists and managers focus resources to gain positive results more quickly. Prioritization should include the following considerations:

- A. Prioritize threatened, endangered, proposed, and sensitive species and geographic areas (including areas of habitat connectivity) at a national level at least every 5 years to determine the most effective use of funding.
 - 1. To prioritize species, consider the percent of the species range on BLM-administered lands or uniqueness of habitats, level of threats or extinction risk, practicability for conservation and recovery, multispecies benefits, and partnering opportunities. Other factors may be considered, as appropriate, and documented.
 - 2. To prioritize geographic areas, consider benefits to entire ecosystems, multistate benefits, multispecies benefits, and the need to conserve endemic species. Other factors may be considered as appropriate and documented.
- B. Prioritize species or geographic areas using a repeatable, transparent process that is primarily objective and supported by data.
- C. Since prioritization is an adaptive process, consider available or changing information and opportunities to positively affect conservation and recovery in partnership with Federal and state agencies; Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations; nongovernmental, national, and international organizations; and other partners as appropriate.

Conservation work may occur for nonpriority species and habitats to maintain stable populations or habitats conditions if funding and staffing is available. In addition, ESA section 7(a)(2) consultations are required for project effects to all threatened, endangered, and proposed species whether or not they are considered BLM priorities.

2.3 Species Action Plan

The development and implementation of special status species action plans should be considered to help identify and implement proactive conservation and recovery actions and projects for priority special status species. When developed, action plans should consider the following.

- A. Action plans can be informal or formal depending on the scope and purpose of the planning effort. State offices will determine the need and level of signature based on action plan specifics.
- B. Plans should include groups of species within similar landscapes or ecosystems. Geographically, plans can be at the state scale, rangewide, or at other appropriate scales.
- C. Action plans should be brief and include text or table descriptions with information such as:
 - 1. Description of the species and geographic range (e.g., landscapes or ecosystems) included in the action plan.
 - 2. Threats to the species.
 - 3. SMART monitoring objectives (refer to Glossary) of actions and projects to address each threat.
 - 4. Funding and staffing needs.
 - 5. Partnership commitments or needs.
 - 6. Monitoring commitments or needs.
 - 7. The level of NEPA or other regulatory compliance that will be necessary for implementation of conservation or recovery actions and projects.
- D. Action plans should incorporate existing species recovery plans or conservation agreements/strategies, where available, and identify BLM-specific contributions toward species conservation or recovery.
- E. Action plans should be adaptive and consider available or changing information and partnership opportunities.
- F. Action plans should be developed in coordination with affected BLM programs (e.g., Wildlife, Sage-Grouse Conservation, Aquatic Resources, and Plant Conservation and Restoration); Federal and state agencies (including state fish and wildlife agencies

and natural heritage programs); Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations; and other partners, as appropriate,

CHAPTER 3. PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE

To manage BLM-administered public lands for multiple use and sustained yield, the BLM must consider, through the planning process, how proposed actions will “...protect the quality of scenic, historical, ecological, environmental, air and atmospheric, water resource and archeological values...provide food and habitat for fish and wildlife...” (FLPMA section 102(a)(8)), account for the long-term needs of future generations for healthy, functioning watersheds (FLPMA section 103(c)), and effect “... the achievement and maintenance in perpetuity of a high-level annual or regular periodic output of the various renewable resources of the public lands” (FLPMA section 103(h)). FLPMA also identifies fish and wildlife development and utilization as one of six “principal or major uses” of public lands (FLPMA section 103(l)) and directs the BLM, when developing or updating land use plans, to “consider the relative scarcity of the values involved” (FLPMA section 202(c)(6)). Other laws may provide additional management direction for BLM-administered lands. For example, legislation or presidential proclamations designating BLM National Landscape Conservation System units may require additional management direction to conserve, protect, or restore identified special status species and their habitats.

In 2024, the BLM promulgated the 43 CFR 6100 Ecosystem Resilience regulations through the Conservation and Landscape Health Rule (89 FR 40308) issued under the authority of FLPMA and section 2002 of the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 (16 U.S.C. 7202). The Ecosystem Resilience regulations advance the BLM’s mission by promoting the health and resilience of ecosystems across BLM-administered lands. In accordance with this rule, conservation is a use of public lands on equal footing with other uses. This policy is consistent with the Ecosystem Resilience regulations where applicable to the management of special status species and their habitats.

To ensure that special status species and habitat resource values and the policy contained herein are given the same level of consideration as other resource values and uses of public lands, the following must be integrated into land use plan and implementation-level decisions:

3.1 Land Use Plan Decisions

- A. Incorporate, to the extent practicable, data and information on the distribution, abundance, current and future threats, population and habitat conditions, and biological requirements for special status species in the planning area.
- B. Evaluate the importance of BLM-administered lands and progress of BLM management in contributing to conserving and recovering special status species.

- C. Ensure land use plans consider requirements to restore, protect, and manage special status species across landscapes, ecosystems, and habitats through informed decision making.
1. Identify proactive conservation and recovery measures for special status species and their habitats through land use planning.
 2. Develop plan components to protect, conserve, and recover special status species, habitats, and ecosystem structure and function.
 3. Identify measurable and quantifiable desired outcomes (i.e., objectives) for restoration of special status species habitats in conservation strategies.
 - i. Desired outcomes will reflect policies and regulations related to ecosystem structure and function, ecosystem resilience, landscape intactness including habitat connectivity, climate change, and the fundamentals of land health and standards and guidelines.
 - ii. Desired outcomes will consider available high-quality information, including Indigenous Knowledge.
 - iii. Desired outcomes will include USFWS and NMFS recovery plan goals, objectives, and actions as appropriate; conservation agreement or strategy objectives and actions as agreed to by BLM; and policies related to special status species management; ecosystem structure and function; water quality and availability; and habitat quality, availability, and connectivity.
 - iv. Desired outcomes will be fully integrated with other programs engaged in habitat and vegetation management, including but not limited to wildlife, range, forestry, plants, aquatics, and soil to ensure outcomes address the full diversity of species and habitat needs across the landscape.
- D. Prioritize the protection and management of habitats with designations such as areas of critical environmental concern, backcountry conservation areas, habitat management areas, research natural areas, units of the National Landscape Conservation System, and other special land designations, as appropriate, to protect special status species populations, ecosystem resilience, and landscape intactness including habitat connectivity.
- E. Establish appropriate mitigation standards for special status species and their habitats and incorporate mitigation strategies into land use plans. Under this policy, the mitigation hierarchy of avoid, minimize, and compensate will be followed. The land use plan should emphasize avoidance of impacts and seek to achieve no net loss or net benefit outcomes for special status species, because such species are important, scarce, and sensitive resources (BLM MS-1794, BLM Handbook H-1794-1).

- F. Include adaptive management analysis and decision-making for the land use plan to facilitate the agency's ability to change its management direction if monitoring data shows unexpected impacts or possible benefits for special status species or their habitats. Adaptive management strategies should be based upon specific resource thresholds, standardized monitoring, and revised management based on those thresholds and the monitoring data.
- G. Complete land use plan evaluations to identify whether plan amendments are necessary to integrate new conservation strategies as they become known.

3.2 Implementation Decisions

- A. Develop and consider, as appropriate, landscape- and ecosystem-level proactive conservation and recovery measures for special status species in project development, NEPA analyses, ESA section 7(a)(2) consultations (refer to section 1.6B for section 7(a)(2) consultation), and land use authorizations. Addressing species and habitat management needs before a species is listed under the ESA will allow more management flexibility, reduce conflicts, and reduce the cost of conservation and recovery. Proactive conservation and recovery may include but is not limited to:
 - 1. Implement conservation and recovery actions from USFWS and NMFS recovery plans or existing conservation agreements/strategies as feasible and appropriate.
 - 2. Work cooperatively with other agencies, organizations, governments, and interested parties to conserve special status species and their habitats at landscape and ecosystem levels.
 - 3. Initiate the development of conservation assessments, strategies, and agreements for the purpose of:
 - i. Furthering the conservation and recovery of special status species and habitats where significant conservation benefits can be achieved at landscape and ecosystem levels.
 - ii. Identifying and working toward achievement of measurable and quantifiable desired outcomes.
 - iii. Providing land managers with high-quality information, knowledge of information gaps, and recommended conservation or mitigation strategies.
 - 4. Incorporate best management practices, standard operating procedures, conservation measures, and design criteria to avoid, minimize, and compensate specific threats to special status species during the planning and permitting of BLM-authorized activities and projects.

5. Use land health standards to help manage BLM special status species habitats at landscape- and ecosystem-levels as consistent with or in lieu of available rangewide or site-specific management plans or conservation strategies.
 6. Use land tenure adjustment tools and agency agreements, as appropriate, to acquire and protect habitat for special status species, especially at landscape- and ecosystem-levels.
 - i. Use land exchanges and other available acquisition strategies and funding mechanisms, including the Land and Water Conservation Fund and Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act, as appropriate, to acquire lands to protect habitat at landscape- and ecosystem-levels for special status species.
 - ii. Issue conservation or restoration leases and establish areas with durability agreements, as appropriate, to help ensure ecosystem resilience through protecting, managing, or restoring natural environments and ecological function, including for special status species and their habitats.
- B. Ensure that BLM-authorized activities avoid and minimize, as consistent with applicable law and the governing land use plan, the degradation or decline of special status species populations, habitats, and ecosystems. Develop and implement compensatory mitigation to offset unavoidable effects from authorized activities and seek to achieve no net loss or net benefit outcomes where feasible for BLM special status species and their habitats (BLM MS-1794, BLM Handbook H-1794-1).
- C. Complete special status species habitat suitability assessments and presence-absence surveys for the purpose of informing NEPA and ESA section 7(a)(2) processes. Qualified surveyors (refer to Glossary) must perform surveys at an appropriate time of year using established or scientifically rigorous and defensible survey protocol.
- D. Include in records of decision and findings of no significant impact how the authorized officer's decision complies with this policy and BLM responsibility to promote the proactive conservation and recovery of special status species and their habitats.

CHAPTER 4. SCIENCE AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

Science-related activities (e.g., research, inventory, monitoring) are critical to effective conservation and recovery, and the following policies support BLM objectives for proactive special status species conservation and recovery.

4.1 Collection and Use of Research, Inventory, Assessment, and Monitoring Data

Following the policies established in this manual section, the collection and use of inventory, assessment, and monitoring data should consider species population numbers and trends, habitat conditions, landscape intactness including habitat connectivity, biodiversity, and ecosystem resilience, or other biological functions or features as appropriate and is meant to:

- A. Establish baseline and interim information to:
 - 1. Understand and strive toward improving special status species population and habitat status and meeting USFWS and NMFS recovery objectives.
 - 2. Allow the BLM to better understand and avoid or minimize threats and limiting factors for recovery.
 - 3. Inform the development and implementation of on-the-ground conservation or recovery projects for special status species.
- B. Assess achievement of land health standards to support special status species habitats.
- C. Provide all occurrence data (including by third parties) collected for special status species on public lands to state natural heritage programs, state fish and wildlife agencies, USFWS, NMFS, or other appropriate species managers in a timely manner. Share BLM-funded observation data collection by nongovernmental partners with state natural heritage programs or other state or Federal agencies, as appropriate.

4.2 Effectiveness Monitoring

Effectiveness monitoring is used to measure the extent to which management actions achieve specific restoration or recovery objectives and to inform adaptive management as follows:

- A. Utilize structured interdisciplinary implementation processes to guide inventory, assessment, and monitoring development and implementation.
- B. Include the following in all land use or conservation plans: (1) management objectives; (2) SMART monitoring objectives; (3) indicators and their connection to monitoring objectives; (4) reporting areas; and (5) appropriate survey designs for selecting monitoring locations relative to spatial and temporal scales of relevant management issues.
- C. Use standardized field methods to allow data comparisons throughout the BLM and in collaboration with partners.
- D. Use electronic data capture, management, and storage tools.
- E. Integrate remote sensing tools.
- F. Provide appropriate training and data quality assurance and quality control

procedures.

- G. Develop and use standard analysis workflows for specific decision types when possible.

4.3 Adaptive Management

Adaptive management is a system of management practices based on clearly identified outcomes and monitoring to determine if management actions are meeting desired outcomes; and, if not, facilitating management changes that will best ensure that outcomes are met or reevaluated (43 CFR 46.30). Adaptive management integrates project design, management, and monitoring of outcomes to help ensure the BLM meets conservation and recovery objectives or adjusts strategies as new information and challenges are presented. Adaptive management can allow the BLM to adjust to uncertainties (e.g., climate change, invasive species, disease) and achieve effective management of special status species and habitats. Further guidance on adaptive management can be found in DOI's 522 DM 1.

This policy directs the use of adaptive management in the analysis of BLM planning and implementation decisions to facilitate successful conservation and recovery efforts for special status species and their habitats. BLM will incorporate adaptive management into the land use planning and implementation-level decision making processes, as appropriate, with a focus on the following principles to achieve the purpose and objectives of this policy:

- A. Base adaptive management strategies upon measurable objectives or desired outcomes, specific resource condition thresholds, and standardized monitoring. These elements can be characterized as the “predict-mitigate-implement-monitor-adapt” adaptive management model as described in the Council on Environmental Quality's 2023 *Modernizing NEPA Implementation* report)). Objectives, outcomes, and resource condition thresholds must be defined in sufficient detail to allow progress toward their achievement to be objectively assessed through implementation and effectiveness monitoring.
- B. Integrate core principles of adaptive management relative to special status species and their habitats, including the use of high-quality information, engagement with relevant authorities, experts, and stakeholders, and the use of an iterative process with periodic reporting and revisions.
- C. Integrate adaptive management into the decision-making process where long-term impacts to special status species and their habitats may be uncertain and future monitoring will be needed to adjust management practices during implementation or in subsequent implementation decisions.
- D. Base adaptive management strategies on predicted outcomes and specific resource goals and objectives.

- E. Identify and implement standard, quantifiable indicators and thresholds where feasible to determine responses of special status species and their habitats to planned management actions or conservation and recovery measures.
- F. Clearly identify and implement adjustments to management if warranted based on monitoring results relative to specific resource goals and objectives.

CHAPTER 5. INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COORDINATION

The successful conservation and recovery of special status species and their habitats relies on coordination and collaboration with other BLM programs; Federal and state agencies (including state fish and wildlife agencies and natural heritage programs); Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations; nongovernmental, national, and international organizations; and other partners. The following forms of internal, public, and intergovernmental involvement are required to implement this policy:

5.1 Internal Coordination and Collaboration

- A. Coordinate across Programs and jurisdictions at headquarters, state, district, and field office levels to ensure implementation of this policy.
- B. Coordinate across BLM programs to protect and restore special status species and habitats and achieve land health standards as they relate to this policy. This includes implementation of recovery plans and conservation agreements or strategies for species status species, land use plan development and implementation; active engagement with interdisciplinary teams; development of necessary compensatory mitigation measures that will seek to achieve no net loss or net benefits to special status species; the design and implementation of on-the-ground restoration actions; and the inventory, assessment, and monitoring of resource values on public lands.

5.2 External Coordination and Collaboration

- A. Maintain meaningful cooperative and collaborative partnerships and agreements with Federal and state agencies (including state fish and wildlife agencies and natural heritage programs); Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations; nongovernmental, national, and international organizations; and other partners, as appropriate, to facilitate successful proactive conservation and recovery of special status species and their habitats, especially at landscape- and ecosystem-levels.
- B. Coordinate with Federal and state agencies (including state fish and wildlife agencies and natural heritage programs), Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations, and other partners, as appropriate, in the identification of BLM special status species (refer to section 2.1 for special status species criteria).
- C. Coordinate with external partners and other BLM programs to maintain inventories of special status species populations and their habitat, including priority habitat connectivity areas.

- D. Engage the public in the importance of public lands for special status species conservation and recovery.
 - 1. Communicate and engage with the public to demonstrate the importance of public lands for special status species conservation and recovery.
 - 2. Work with BLM public affairs staff to use existing or create new outreach tools to communicate creatively with the public.
 - 3. Engage, train, and support a new generation of Americans working to further conservation in the country.

5.3 Coordination and Cooperation with Tribes

Treaties, statutes, executive orders, judicial decisions, and agreements differentiate the relationship of Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations from other parties that coordinate with, or are affected by, the Federal Government. Tribes are self-governing with fundamental rights to set their own priorities and make decisions affecting their resources and distinctive ways of life. The BLM policy is to engage in regular and meaningful consultation and collaboration with Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations as follows:

- A. Manage and protect special status species and their habitats in a manner consistent with treaty, religious, subsistence, and cultural interests of federally recognized Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations.
 - 1. Consider and include conservation and management plans from Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations for culturally important resources, as appropriate and feasible, in analyses, decision making, and management of special status species and habitats.
 - 2. Evaluate and incorporate Indigenous Knowledge and expertise as appropriate in analyses, decision making, and the management of special status species and habitats.
- B. Provide opportunities for Tribes to shape the direction of species conservation and land management activities.
 - 1. Engage Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations in meaningful consultation regarding management of special status species and habitats at the earliest phases of planning and decision making.
 - 2. Provide affected Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations opportunities to participate in data collection, consensus seeking, and associated processes.

- C. When appropriate and at the request of Tribes or Alaska Native Corporations, pursue interdisciplinary and intergovernmental agreements involving BLM special status species management.
- D. Assist Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations at their request in developing and expanding Tribal programs that promote the health of ecosystems upon which BLM special status species depend. This includes:
 - 1. Offering and providing scientific and technical assistance and information for the development of Tribal conservation and management plans.
 - 2. Cooperatively identifying appropriate management measures to address concerns and manage special status species and their habitats.

CHAPTER 6. TECHNICAL SKILLS

To successfully carry out the BLM mission, DOI priorities, ESA regulations, and this policy, the T&E Program requires significant breadth and depth of professional skills. For example, subject matter experts in ecology, wildlife biology, aquatic biology or hydrology, and botany are needed to provide sufficient technical expertise for the coordination, development, and implementation of conservation and recovery efforts. Biological and botanical expertise is also needed to assist with NEPA analyses and ESA section 7(a)(2) consultations. Support and coordination is required from subject matter experts in BLM land uses, such as forestry, range, wild horse and burro, fluid minerals, solid minerals, and renewable energy in accordance with this policy. Since the breadth and depth of knowledge, skills, and abilities required by the subactivity exceeds the capacity of any one employee, the BLM should employ a range of technical specialists with a focus on positions in the Wildlife Biology (0486), Ecology (0408), Fish Biology (0482), Botany (0430), and Natural Resources Management and Biological Science (0401) series. Relying on staff with tangential experience in these fields is generally not considered sufficient for long-term, programmatic success. The BLM should invest in continuing education under this program to successfully implement this policy. The T&E Program encourages the development of early career positions and career ladders for long-term program success.

CHAPTER 7. REPORTING AND ACCOUNTABILITY REQUIREMENTS

7.1 Annual Reporting Requirements

Section 18 of the ESA requires the USFWS to submit to Congress (through the Secretary of the Interior) an annual report of expenditures for the conservation of threatened and endangered species. The annual report includes Federal and state government expenditures during the preceding Federal fiscal year. Congress uses the report to compare how money is allocated across species. The report is not used to determine appropriations, nor does it show how much was appropriated for each species. The report is available to the public, and the information is often used by environmental organizations to assist with conservation.

To gather the information, the Director of the USFWS (through the Ecological Services Program) sends a request for data each year to all Federal agencies that may expend funds on the conservation of ESA-listed species. The same request is also sent to the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, which gathers the data from states and territories. The USFWS compiles the data and prepares the annual report to Congress.

The BLM T&E Program collects the expenditure data from states through an annual data call. The annual data call also requests conservation and recovery project-specific information. This information is used by the T&E Program to strategically track, plan, and implement conservation and recovery actions, coordinate conservation needs across BLM resource programs, and communicate with partners. To meet reporting requirements and improve conservation and recovery efforts, BLM policy is to:

- A. Complete annual reporting of expenditures for special status species activities, using available tools and guidance as provided by Headquarters.
- B. Complete annual reporting of activities and projects for special status species using available tools and guidance as provided by Headquarters.

7.2 Program Accountability Requirements

Accountability to T&E Program policies and activity-based costing principles helps focus staff and agency priorities toward proactive conservation and recovery of special status species. Reporting requirements allow the BLM to show accomplishments and inform current and future planning efforts. To enable strategic use of funds and implementation of conservation and recovery efforts for special status species, the BLM will:

- A. Adhere to activity-based costing principles (refer to BLM H-1684, Fund Code Handbook), for which the 1170 subactivity and associated program elements are limited in use to actions directly benefiting the T&E, Wildlife, and Sage-Grouse Programs and driven by or caused by the program(s).
- B. Use benefitting subactivities or cost recovery funds to complete surveys and monitoring when associated with land use authorizations, including ESA section 7(a)(2) consultations and compliance with NEPA evaluations.
- C. In the case of programs where the 1170 T&E Program contributes to a cross-cut, planned actions of the cross-cutting Program should benefit special status species.
- D. Provide technical T&E Program reviews by program leads at the state office and headquarters as necessary to identify emerging issues and increase success of meeting T&E Program objectives for special status species. Program reviews can be singularly focused or multifaceted to examine budget allocations, performance, staffing levels and structure, and policy adherence.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

-A-

Adaptive management. A system of management practices based on clearly identified outcomes and monitoring to determine whether management actions are meeting desired outcomes; and, if not, facilitating management changes that will best ensure that outcomes are met or re-evaluated (43 CFR 46.30).

Alaska Native Corporation. Any Alaska Native Village Corporation, Group Corporation, Urban Corporation, former reserve corporation, or regional corporation as defined in, or established pursuant to, the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (11 43 U.S.C. 1601 et seq.).

Area of critical environmental concern (ACEC). An area where special management is required to protect and prevent irreparable damage to important historic, cultural, or scenic values; fish or wildlife resources; or natural systems or processes or to protect human life and safety from natural hazards (43 CFR 1601.0-5(a)).

-B-

Backcountry conservation areas. An administrative unit designated in the land use planning process that is generally intact and undeveloped, typically with backcountry or primitive recreation setting characteristics; where existing or proposed opportunities for fish and/or wildlife dependent recreation are recognized for their unique value, importance and/or distinctiveness; and is commensurately managed to protect and enhance fish and/or wildlife habitat.

Best management practice. Guidelines designed to facilitate progress towards achievement and maintenance of land health standards or other desired outcomes.

Biodiversity. The variety of life and its processes, including the variety of living organisms, the genetic differences among them, and the communities and ecosystems in which they occur.

-C-

Candidate species. Defined by USFWS as species for which the USFWS has sufficient information on their biological status and threats to propose them as endangered or threatened under the ESA, but for which development of a proposed listing regulation is precluded by other higher priority listing activities. NMFS defines candidate species as (1) species that are the subject of a petition to list and for which NMFS has determined that listing may be warranted, pursuant to section 4(b)(3)(A) of the ESA, and (2) species that are not the subject of a petition but for which NMFS has announced the initiation of a status review in the Federal Register (81 FR 95171; December 27, 2016). Candidate species receive no statutory protection under the ESA.

Compensatory mitigation. Compensating for the remaining impacts after all appropriate and practicable avoidance and minimization measures have been applied, by replacing or providing substitute resources or environments through the restoration, establishment, enhancement, or preservation of resources and their values, services, and functions (40 CFR 1508.1; MS-1794, Rel. No. 1-1807).

Conservation. BLM defines conservation as the management of natural resources to promote protection and restoration. Conservation actions are effective at building resilient lands and are designed to reach desired future conditions through protection, restoration, and other types of planning, permitting, and program decision-making (43 CFR 6101.4). The USFWS definition is consistent, with a focus on listed species: Under section 3 of the ESA and 50 CFR 424.02, the terms "conserve", "conserving", and "conservation" mean to use and the use of all methods and procedures which are necessary to bring any endangered species or threatened species to the point at which the measures provided pursuant to this Act are no longer necessary, *i.e.*, the species is recovered in accordance with § 402.02 of this chapter. Such methods and procedures include, but are not limited to, all activities associated with scientific resources management such as research, census, law enforcement, habitat acquisition and maintenance, propagation, live trapping, and transplantation, and, in the extraordinary case where population pressures within a given ecosystem cannot be otherwise relieved, may include regulated taking.

-D-

Delisted Species. Species will be delisted from the list of endangered and threatened wildlife and plants if (1) the species is extinct; (2) the species has recovered to the point at which it no longer meets the definition of an endangered species or a threatened species, (3) new information that has become available since the original listing decision shows the listed entity does not meet the definition of an endangered species or a threatened species, or (4) new information that has become available since the original listing decision shows the listed entity does not meet the definition of a species (50 CFR 424.11(e)). Delisting will occur after consideration of any one or a combination of the following factors: (1) The present or threatened destruction, modification, or curtailment of its habitat or range; (2) Overutilization for commercial, recreational, scientific, or educational purposes; (3) Disease or predation; (4) The inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms; or (5) Other natural or manmade factors affecting its continued existence (50 CFR 424.11 (c)).

Disturbance. Changes in environmental conditions, either discrete or chronic, that affect ecosystem resilience. Disturbances may be viewed as "characteristic" when ecosystems or species have evolved to survive, exploit, and even depend on a disturbance or "uncharacteristic," when attributes of the disturbance (e.g., type, timing, frequency, magnitude, duration) are outside of prevailing background conditions. Disturbances may be natural or human caused (43 CFR 6101.4).

-E-

Ecosystem. A structural and functional unit of ecology where the living organisms interact with each other and the surrounding environment. Ecosystems can be any scale (e.g., a spring that is

home to an endemic species, an entire mountain range that provides habitat and migratory corridors for wide-ranging species), dependent on the species and conservation goals of interest.

Ecosystem resilience. The capacity of ecosystems (e.g., old-growth forests and woodlands, sagebrush core areas, riparian areas, desert habitats) to adapt to changing environmental conditions and maintain or regain their fundamental composition, structure, and function (including maintaining habitat connectivity and providing ecosystem services) when altered by disturbances such as drought, wildfire, and nonnative invasive species (43 CFR 6101.4).

Effects. Defined differently depending on the type of evaluation being conducted. Effects under BLM planning and NEPA evaluations are defined under 40 CFR 1508.1(g). Effects under ESA section 7 consultation regulations are defined under 50 CFR 402.02. Effects and impacts in this policy are synonymous.

Endangered species. A species that is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range (ESA section 3; 50 CFR 17.3).

ESA-listed species. Any species of fish, wildlife, or plant which is endangered or threatened under section 4 of the act. Listed species are found in 50 CFR 17.11-17.12.

-H-

Habitat connectivity. Refers to how and to what degree distinct sources of food, water, and shelter for fish, wildlife, and plant populations are distributed and interconnected, spatially and temporally, across terrestrial and aquatic systems, thereby facilitating or impeding movement among resource patches. Connectivity includes structural connectivity (the physical arrangements of disturbance or patches) and functional connectivity (the ability for individuals to move across contours of disturbance or among patches). Without connectivity, ecosystems cannot function properly, and without well-functioning ecosystems, biodiversity is at risk. The disruption or absence of ecological connectivity occurs because human-induced “fragmentation” breaks up a habitat, ecosystem, or land-use type into smaller and smaller parcels.

Habitat management area. Refers to an area that is managed to protect a particular species or habitats.

High-quality information. Information that promotes reasoned, evidence-based agency decisions. Information that meets the standards for objectivity, utility, and integrity as set forth in the Department’s Information Quality Guidelines qualifies as high-quality information. Indigenous Knowledge qualifies as high-quality information when it is gained by prior, informed consent free of coercion and generally meets the standards for high-quality information (43 CFR 6101.4).

-I-

Important, scarce, or sensitive resources (43 CFR 6101.4).

- (1) *Important resources* means resources that the BLM has determined to warrant special consideration, consistent with applicable law.
- (2) *Scarce resources* means resources that are not plentiful or abundant and may include resources that are experiencing a downward trend in condition.
- (3) *Sensitive resources* means resources that are delicate and vulnerable to adverse change, such as resources that lack resilience to changing circumstances.

Indigenous Knowledge. A body of observations, oral and written knowledge, innovations, technologies, practices, and beliefs developed by Indigenous Peoples through interaction and experience with the environment. Indigenous Knowledge is applied to phenomena across biological, physical, social, cultural, and spiritual systems. Indigenous Knowledge can be developed over millennia, continue to develop, and include understanding based on evidence acquired through direct contact with the environment and long-term experiences, as well as extensive observations, lessons, and skills passed from generation to generation. Indigenous Knowledge is developed, held, and stewarded by Indigenous Peoples and is often intrinsic within Indigenous legal traditions, including customary law or traditional governance structures and decision-making processes. Other terms, such as Traditional Knowledge, Traditional Ecological Knowledge, Genetic Resources associated with Traditional Knowledge, Traditional Cultural Expression, Tribal Ecological Knowledge, Native Science, Indigenous Applied Science, Indigenous Science, and others, are sometimes used to describe this knowledge system (43 CFR 6101.4).

Intact landscape. A relatively unfragmented landscape free of local conditions that could permanently or significantly disrupt, impair, or degrade the landscape's composition, structure, or function. Intact landscapes are large enough to maintain native biological diversity, including viable populations of wide-ranging species. Intact landscapes provide critical ecosystem services and are resilient to disturbance and environmental change and thus may be prioritized for conservation action. For example, an intact landscape would have minimal fragmentation from roads, fences, and dams; low densities of agricultural, urban, and industrial development; and minimal pollution levels (43 CFR 6101.4).

Intactness. A measure of the degree to which human influences, which can include invasive species and unnatural wildfire, alter or impair the structure, function, or composition of a landscape. Areas experiencing a natural fire regime can be intact (43 CFR 6101.4).

Invasive species. With regard to a particular ecosystem, a nonnative organism whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm, or harm to human, animal, or plant health (Executive Order 13112).

-L-

Land health. The degree to which the integrity of the soil, water, and ecological processes sustain habitat quality and ecosystem functions (43 CFR 6101.4).

Landscape. An area that is spatially heterogeneous in at least one factor of interest which may include common management concerns or conditions. The landscape is not defined by the size of the area, but rather by the interacting elements that are relevant and meaningful in a management context. Landscapes may be defined in terms of aquatic conditions, such as watersheds, or terrestrial conditions, such as ecoregions (43 CFR 6101.4).

Landscape-level conservation. An integrated management approach that recognizes the full array of interactions within an ecosystem, including humans, rather than considering single issues, species, or ecosystem services in isolation. The goal of landscape-level conservation is to support intact and functional ecological communities that are connected and resilient on BLM-administered lands and across jurisdictions. With growing land uses and climate change complexities, connected and resilient landscapes are increasingly important for ensuring that species populations remain viable and that migrations, range shifts, and other transitions due to climate change are supported.

-M-

Mitigation. Includes (1) avoiding the impacts of a proposed action by not taking a certain action or parts of an action; (2) minimizing impacts by limiting the degree or magnitude of the action and its implementation; (3) rectifying the impact of the action by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the affected environment; (4) reducing or eliminating the impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations during the life of the action; and (5) compensating for the impact of the action by replacing or providing substitute resources or environments. In practice, the mitigation sequence is often summarized as avoid, minimize, and compensate. The BLM generally applies mitigation hierarchically: first avoid, then minimize, and then compensate for any residual impacts from proposed actions (40 CFR 1508.1; 43 CFR 6101.4; MS-1794, Rel. No. 1-1807).

Mitigation strategies. Documents that identify, evaluate, and communicate potential mitigation needs and mitigation measures in a geographic area, at relevant scales, in advance of anticipated public land uses (43 CFR 6101.4).

Monitoring. The periodic observation and orderly collection of data to evaluate (1) existing conditions, (2) the effects of management actions, or (3) the effectiveness of actions taken to meet management objectives (43 CFR 6101.4).

-N-

Net benefit. When mitigation results in an improvement to special status species populations and their habitats above baseline conditions (BLM MS-1794, Rel. No. 1-1807).

-P-

Priority habitat (for special status species). Habitat conditions, areas, or types that are identified in ESA recovery plans, land use plans, or special studies as having special significance for focused, proactive management or conservation actions.

Proposed species. A species of fish, wildlife, or plant that is proposed in the Federal Register to be listed under section 4 of the ESA (ESA section 3; 50 CFR 17.3).

Protection. The act or process of conservation by maintaining the existence of resources while preventing degradation, damage, or destruction. Protection is not synonymous with preservation and allows for active management or other uses consistent with multiple use and sustained yield principles (43 CFR 6101.4).

Public lands. Any land and interest in land owned by the United States within the several States and administered by the Secretary of the Interior through the Bureau of Public Law 94–579—October 21, 1976, as amended through December 19, 2014 3 Land Management, without regard to how the United States acquired ownership, except— (1) lands located on the Outer Continental Shelf; and (2) lands held for the benefit of Indians, Aleuts, and Eskimos (FLPMA section 103(e)).

-Q-

Qualified Surveyors. Agency employees, partners, or contractors performing special status species surveys must have applicable biological or botanical education or demonstrated species-specific proficiency. Survey training (e.g., USFWS training and certification) may be required prior to performing species survey work but does not substitute for demonstrated species-specific proficiency. Field crews and inexperienced surveyors must be led by qualified surveyors.

-R-

Reclamation. When used in relation to individual project goals and objectives, practices intended to achieve an outcome that reflects the final goal to restore the character and productivity of the land and water. Components of reclamation include, as applicable (43 CFR 6101.4):

- (1) Isolating, controlling, or removing toxic or deleterious substances;
- (2) Regrading and reshaping to conform with adjacent landforms, facilitate revegetation, control drainage, and minimize erosion;
- (3) Rehabilitating fisheries, wildlife, or plant habitat;
- (4) Placing growth medium and establishing self-sustaining revegetation;
- (5) Removing or stabilizing buildings, structures, or other support facilities;
- (6) Plugging drill holes and closing underground workings; and
- (7) Providing for post-activity monitoring, maintenance, or treatment.

Recovery means to improve the status of federally listed threatened or endangered species to the point at which listing is no longer appropriate under the criteria set out in section 4(a)(1) of the Act (50 CFR 402.02).

Refugia. A location which supports an isolated or relict population of a once more widespread species. This isolation can be due to climatic changes, geography, or human activities such as deforestation and overhunting.

Research natural area. An area that is established and maintained for the primary purpose of research and education because the land has one or more of the following characteristics (43 CFR 8223):

- (1) A typical representation of a common plant or animal association;
- (2) An unusual plant or animal association;
- (3) A threatened or endangered plant or animal species;
- (4) A typical representation of common geologic, soil, or water features; or
- (5) Outstanding or unusual geologic, soil, or water features.

Restoration. The process or act of conservation by passively or actively assisting the recovery of an ecosystem that has been degraded, damaged, or destroyed to a more natural, native ecological state (43 CFR 6101.4).

-S-

Sensitive species. A species the BLM has determined to provide special management consideration to help preclude the need for future listing under the ESA.

Significant progress. Measurable or observable changes in the indicators that demonstrate improved land health. Acceptable levels of change must be realistic in terms of the capability of the resource but must also be as expeditious and effective as practical (43 CFR 6101.4).

SMART monitoring objectives. Monitoring objectives that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.

Stopover site. A place for birds to rest, refuel, and seek shelter during migration movements which may be the most perilous stage of a bird's lifecycle.

Special status species. Species that are (1) federally listed (threatened or endangered), proposed, or candidates for listing under the ESA; (2) delisted species (minimum 5 years post-delisting or throughout the post-delisting monitoring period, whichever is longer); and (3) BLM sensitive species.

Sustained yield. The achievement and maintenance in perpetuity of a high-level annual or regular periodic output of the various renewable resources of BLM-managed lands consistent with multiple use and without permanent impairment of the productivity of the land. Preventing permanent impairment means that renewable resources are not permanently depleted and that desired future conditions are met for future generations. Ecosystem resilience is essential to the BLM's ability to manage for sustained yield (43 CFR 6101.4).

-T-

Threatened species. Any species likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range (ESA section 3, 50 CFR 17.3).

Tribe. A Tribal Nation that is defined as an American Indian or Alaska Native Tribe, band, nation, pueblo, village, or community that the Secretary of the Interior acknowledges as a Federally recognized Tribe pursuant to the Federally Recognized Indian Tribe List Act of 1994, 25 U.S.C. 5130 and per 512 DM 4.

-U-

Unnecessary or undue degradation. Harm to resources or values that is not necessary to accomplish a use's stated goals or is excessive or disproportionate to the proposed action or an existing disturbance. Unnecessary or undue degradation includes two distinct elements: "Unnecessary degradation" means harm to land resources or values that is not needed to accomplish a use's stated goals. For example, approving a proposed access road causing damage to critical habitat for a plant listed as endangered under the ESA that could be located without any such impacts and still provide the needed access may result in unnecessary degradation. "Undue degradation" means harm to land resources or values that is excessive or disproportionate to the proposed action or an existing disturbance. For example, approving a proposed access road causing damage to the only remaining critical habitat for a plant listed as endangered under the ESA, even if there is not another location for the road, may result in undue degradation. The statutory obligation to prevent "unnecessary or undue degradation" applies when either unnecessary degradation or undue degradation, and not necessarily both, is implicated (43 CFR 6101.4).