



# Recovery of Species Under the Endangered Species Act

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Endangered and threatened species may have different needs and may require different conservation strategies to achieve recovery. Recovery is the process of restoring listed species and their ecosystems to the point where they no longer require [Endangered Species Act](#) protections.

A primary role for NOAA Fisheries in recovering endangered and threatened species is to set goals for each species' recovery comeback through the development of recovery plans. NOAA Fisheries works with other federal agencies, states, tribes, and other stakeholders to recover listed species.

[Learn more about what we do to recover endangered and threatened species >](#)

## Recovery Plans

NOAA Fisheries publishes recovery plans, which are sometimes prepared with the assistance of recovery teams, contractors, state agencies, and others. Recovery plans do not necessarily represent the views, official positions, or approval of any individuals or agencies involved in the plans' preparation, other than NOAA Fisheries. They represent the official position of NOAA Fisheries only after they have been signed by the Assistant or Regional Administrator. Recovery plans are guidance and planning documents only. Public or private parties are not legally obligated to implement any actions identified in the plans beyond existing legal requirements. Nothing in the plans should be interpreted as a commitment or requirement that any federal agency obligate or pay funds in any one fiscal year in excess of appropriations made by Congress for that fiscal year in contravention of the Anti-Deficiency Act, 31 U.S.C. § 1341, or any other law or regulation. Approved recovery plans may be updated in response to new findings, changes in species status, and completed recovery actions.

[Read our recovery plans >](#)

## What Are Recovery Plans?

A recovery plan serves as a road map for species recovery—the plan outlines the path and tasks required to restore and secure self-sustaining wild populations. It is a non-regulatory document that describes, justifies, and schedules the research and management actions necessary to support recovery of a species.

Recovery plans are developed with federal, state, tribal, local governmental, nongovernmental, and other interested parties. If successfully implemented, recovery plans result in a listed species being reclassified from endangered to threatened status, or result in the [delisting](#) and removal of the species from ESA protections.

Recovery plans must incorporate, at a minimum:

1. A description of site-specific management actions necessary to achieve species recovery.
2. Objective, measurable criteria which, when met, would result in a determination that the species be delisted.
3. Estimates of the time and costs required to achieve the plan's goal.

Section 4(f) of the ESA directs NOAA Fisheries to develop and implement recovery plans for threatened and endangered species, unless such a plan would not promote conservation of the species.

Though recovery plans are often developed for a single species, plans are also developed for the simultaneous recovery of several listed species when they occur together in a shared habitat or ecosystem. By focusing on shared habitats and ecosystems, listed species will be conserved and other species of marine animals and plants will benefit.

## How Do We Develop Recovery Plans?

Recovery teams write many, but not all, recovery plans. In some cases, these teams guide the plan's implementation. Section 4 of the ESA allows us to appoint recovery teams made up of public and private entities who then develop and implement recovery plans. We have made a concerted effort to include representative stakeholders (those with an interest in the species) on recovery teams and to involve the public in recovery planning. If a recovery team is necessary, NOAA Fisheries brings the team together by invitation.

We have developed [guidance](#) to help recovery teams draft recovery plans. This guidance provides information to ensure recovery plans are consistent and useful to potential partners in recovering species. The guidance also stresses the importance of involving stakeholders in the recovery process.

We also follow [additional policies, guidance, and regulations](#) associated with species recovery.

All recovery plans are made available in draft form, and public comments are solicited before the plan is finalized. This ensures that the public has an opportunity to provide input in the recovery planning process.

## How Are Recovery Plans Implemented?

While all U.S. citizens are responsible for implementing recovery actions, responsibility tends to fall largely on federal, state, and local agencies, as well as tribes and interested organizations or individuals within the range of the species.

Under section 6 of the ESA, we provide [assistance and grant funding to States](#) to support conservation of listed species and implementation of recovery plans. Grant funding, through the [Species Recovery Grants Program](#), can be used to support management, research, and monitoring efforts that directly benefit conservation of the species.

Federal agencies may also carry out conservation actions as part of their obligations under section 7(a)(1) of the ESA, or as a means to minimize activities that adversely affect a species as part of an [interagency consultation](#). States, local agencies, and private entities may conduct conservation actions to minimize or mitigate "[incidental take](#)" of a species as part of a [conservation plan](#) under section 10 of the ESA.

Private and public entities and individuals also take actions to recover species simply because it's the right thing to do or because they have an interest in seeing the species "[delisted](#)."

## How Do We Know If We're Making Progress?

NOAA Fisheries periodically reviews species to ensure that they are listed appropriately. Because the ESA requires these reviews at least once every 5 years, they are referred to as 5-year reviews.

[Find 5-year review documents >](#)

## More Information

- [Understanding Endangered and Threatened Species Recovery](#)
- [Recovery Plans](#)
- [5-Year Reviews](#)
- [ESA Threatened & Endangered Species](#)
- [2016 National Recovery Program Review](#)
- [Biennial Report to Congress](#)
- [Endangered Species Conservation](#)

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