

## STAFF SUMMARY FOR APRIL 13-14, 2016

**17C. OTHER ITEMS – FEDERAL AGENCIES REPORT****Today's Item**Information Action 

This is a standing agenda item to receive reports on any recent federal agency activities of interest not otherwise addressed under other agenda items.

**Summary of Previous/Future Actions (N/A)****Background**

**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration:** Announced new plans for additional recovery efforts related to eight species, including central coast coho salmon and Sacramento River winter-run Chinook salmon (Exhibit C1), released a report highlighting progress in reducing fisheries bycatch (Exhibit C2), and issued a draft national strategy for further reducing fisheries bycatch (Exhibit C3).

**U.S. Department of the Interior:** Released a report on climate change impacts on western water resources, including increased stressors on salmon fisheries and habitat (Exhibit C4).

**US Fish and Wildlife Service:** Announced \$5 million in wildlife grants related to tribes and tribal lands, including three projects in California, one of which is related to fisher and spotted owl impacts from marijuana cultivation on tribal and public lands (Exhibit C5), and proposed delisting three island fox subspecies at the Channel Islands due to successful recovery efforts (island fox is also listed under the California Endangered Species Act; see Exhibit C6).

**Significant Public Comments (N/A)****Recommendation (N/A)****Exhibits**

- C1. [NOAA news release: \*New action plans outline recovery efforts for eight 'Species in the Spotlight,\* dated Feb 10, 2016](#)
- C2. [NOAA news release: \*NOAA report highlights progress in reducing bycatch,\* dated Feb 18, 2016](#)
- C3. [NOAA news release: \*NOAA issues draft national fisheries strategy to reduce bycatch,\* dated Feb 25, 2016](#)
- C4. [USDIO news release: \*Interior Department Releases Report Underscoring Impacts of Climate Change on Western Water Resources,\* dated Mar 22, 2016](#)
- C5. [USFWS news release: \*The Importance of Native American Tribes and Their Lands to Conservation Recognized with Nearly \\$5 Million in Wildlife Grants,\* dated Mar 25, 2016 \(three projects in California, one related to fisher and spotted owl impacts from marijuana cultivation on tribal and public lands\)](#)
- C6. [USFWS news release: \*Service Proposes Delisting Three Fox Subspecies on Northern Channel Islands Due to Recovery, Highlighting Historic Endangered Species Act Success,\* dated Feb 12, 2016](#)

**Motion/Direction (N/A)**



National Oceanic and Atmospheric  
Administration  
U.S. Department of Commerce

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# New action plans outline recovery efforts for eight ‘Species in the Spotlight’

Fisheries | endangered species | fisheries management

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February 10, 2016 — Today, NOAA Fisheries released new five-year action plans for the eight marine species identified as among the most at risk of extinction through NOAA’s Species in the Spotlight.



The goal of this campaign is to stop the decline of these species and move them toward recovery. NOAA is also looking to join with local, state and tribal governments, academic partners and the public to make sure these endangered species do not decline further.



Southern Resident Killer whale. (NOAA)

The eight species highlighted in the action plans, all listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act, are the Gulf of Maine population of Atlantic salmon, Central California Coast coho salmon, Cook Inlet beluga whales, Hawaiian monk seals, Pacific leatherback sea turtles, Sacramento River winter-run chinook salmon, Southern Resident killer whales in Puget Sound, and white abalone.

“The action plans will help change the trajectory to recovery for these eight extremely vulnerable species,” said Eileen Sobeck, assistant NOAA administrator for NOAA Fisheries. “To ensure these species have a fighting chance at recovery, we need help from our valued partners and the public. Anyone can visit our [Species in the Spotlight Action Plans](#) site to learn about NOAA’s science behind the effort, and how they can contribute toward the milestones that will help these species recover.”

The public can visit NOAA’s [Species in the Spotlight](#) site to learn about NOAA’s science behind this effort.

The 5-year action plans are an important step in supporting the agency’s goal to significantly reduce, stabilize, or reverse the rate of decline for the eight target species. Action plans look at previous species recovery plans and highlight the focused, immediate actions our partners and the public do to stabilize these eight species and help prevent their extinction.

Recovery plans, devised for all threatened and endangered species, are more detailed than action plans and include all of the management actions necessary for species recovery, criteria necessary for a species to be considered recovered and removed from the endangered species list, and time and cost estimates for its goals.

One of the goals of the action plans includes expansion of floodplain and estuarine habitat restoration efforts to improve the fitness and survival of Central California Coast coho salmon. Efforts are also aimed at detecting and preventing catastrophic disease outbreaks and disease-related mortality for Hawaiian monk seals, whose lack of genetic diversity leaves them vulnerable in their ability to respond to newly introduced diseases.

“Recovering threatened and endangered species also supports strong coastal communities and benefits our nation’s economy,” said Sobeck. “Recovered species play important roles in a healthy marine food web, contributing to sustainable fisheries and creating vibrant coastal destinations with wildlife tourism opportunities.”

While this campaign brings additional awareness to these eight species, it also underscores NOAA Fisheries’ comprehensive approach to the conservation and recovery of all threatened and endangered marine species. To learn more about NOAA Fisheries’ ongoing protected resources program, visit the [Protected Resources homepage](#).

NOAA’s mission is to understand and predict changes in the Earth’s environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and to conserve and manage our coastal and marine resources. Join us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and our other [social media channels](#).

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National Oceanic and Atmospheric  
Administration  
U.S. Department of Commerce

# NOAA report highlights progress in reducing bycatch

Fisheries | bycatch fisheries management sustainable fisheries

February 18, 2016 — Today, NOAA released the Bycatch Reduction Engineering Report to Congress, detailing the agency's progress in preventing and reducing bycatch through research on technology innovation and fishing practice solutions.



Bycatch occurs when fishermen—both recreational and commercial—discard unintentionally caught fish, or when fishing gear harms or kills marine resources like marine mammals, seabirds, corals, sponges, sea turtles or protected fish. Reducing bycatch is a key part of NOAA's efforts to maintain sustainable fisheries and conserve and recover protected species.

"While U.S. fisheries management is a world model of success generally, we still need to make progress on bycatch—a

complex, global issue that threatens the sustainability and resiliency of our fishing communities, economies, and ocean ecosystems,” said Eileen Sobeck, assistant NOAA administrator for fisheries. “We work side-by-side with fishermen on their boats to develop solutions to top bycatch challenges facing our nation’s fisheries. While we’ve made great progress, there is more to do.”

Projects realized through NOAA grants highlighted in the 2014 [Report to Congress](#) include:

- Use of real-time maps to identify butterfish hotspots, reducing butterfish bycatch in the Northeast longfin squid fishery by 54 percent in two years;
- Use of artificial illumination in the West Coast ocean shrimp trawl fishery, reducing bycatch of protected eulachon by up to 91 percent; and,
- Use of a modified gillnet that reduced sturgeon interactions by more than 60 percent in Virginia and North Carolina.

Under the Magnuson Stevens Act, NOAA and its partners have nearly 40 years of experience in finding innovative solutions to bycatch in the United States and internationally. For example, NOAA’s [Bycatch Reduction Engineering Program](#) funds research that fosters innovative technological solutions and investigates changes in fishing practices to minimize bycatch. The program is now accepting applications for this year’s grants.

The report announced today is one of several bycatch products that NOAA Fisheries is introducing this month, as the agency works on multiple fronts to improve our approach to bycatch. Others include a draft National Bycatch Strategy and an update to bycatch statistics—both scheduled to come out in the next few weeks.

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National Oceanic and Atmospheric  
Administration  
U.S. Department of Commerce

# NOAA issues draft national fisheries strategy to reduce bycatch

Fisheries | fisheries management

February 25, 2016 — NOAA is inviting public comment on its draft National Bycatch Reduction Strategy. The proposal continues the nation's momentum on reducing bycatch--when fishermen catch fish they don't want, can't keep, or aren't allowed to keep.



Bycatch can also occur when fishing gear harms or kills marine mammals, seabirds, corals, sponges, sea turtles, or protected fish.

“Bycatch is a complex, global issue that can threaten the continued sustainability and resiliency of our fishing communities, economies and ocean ecosystems,” said Eileen Sobeck, assistant NOAA administrator for fisheries. “The United States is doing its part to reduce and prevent it. This strategy outlines how NOAA is working on multiple fronts with many partners to develop innovative solutions to minimize bycatch here and helping others do so abroad.”

The draft strategy provides a coordinated national approach for NOAA and its partners to identify and address how bycatch issues differ by region. It also addresses domestic and international program areas such as bycatch monitoring, research, management, program evaluation, enforcement and communication.

“This strategy recognizes both where we’ve been and where we are going and positions the United States to build on decades of bycatch reduction work under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the Marine Mammal Protection Act, Endangered Species Act, and other relevant laws,” said Sobeck. “Our goal is to reduce bycatch and encourage use of unwanted catch, keeping our fisheries sustainable while conserving and recovering protected species.”

The strategy completes a series of bycatch-related documents out this month. A [report to Congress](#), released last week, shows the agency’s progress in improving technologies and changing fishing practices to reduce and prevent bycatch. Earlier this week, NOAA Fisheries distributed an [update to its bycatch statistics](#) showing how bycatch varies by fishery and type of gear.

“Bycatch is an issue NOAA Fisheries cannot address alone,” said Richard Merrick, Ph.D., chief scientist for NOAA Fisheries. “Our strategy involves close collaboration with fishermen, management partners, researchers, and other stakeholders to find win-win solutions.”

NOAA Fisheries is [accepting public comment](#) on the draft strategy through June 3. When the strategy is final, NOAA will consult with its partners and stakeholders to prepare regional action plans.

NOAA’s mission is to understand and predict changes in the Earth’s environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and to conserve and manage our coastal and marine resources. Join us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and our other [social media channels](#).

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# Interior Department Releases Report Underscoring Impacts of Climate Change on Western Water Resources

New, interactive basin-by-basin visualization tool also released following World Water Day White House Summit

Date: March 22, 2016

Contact: Jessica Kershaw (Interior), [Interior\\_press@ios.doi.gov](mailto:Interior_press@ios.doi.gov)

**WASHINGTON** – Putting the national spotlight on the importance of water sustainability, the Department of the Interior and the Bureau of Reclamation released a basin-by-basin report that characterizes the impacts of climate change and details adaptation strategies to better protect major river basins in the West that are fundamental to the health, economy, security and ecology of 17 Western states.

The SECURE Water Act Report, produced by Interior’s Bureau of Reclamation and its state and local partners, was released following today’s first White House Summit on Water in observance of World Water Day.

“One of the greatest challenges we face is dealing with the impacts of climate change on our nation’s water, which is really the lifeblood of our economy,” said Interior’s Deputy Secretary Michael L. Connor. “We need to continue to develop collaborative strategies across each river basin to ensure that our nation’s water and power supplies, agricultural activities, ecosystems, and other resources all have sustainable paths forward.”

The report identifies climate change as a growing risk to Western water management and cites warmer temperatures, changes to precipitation, snowpack and the timing and quality of streamflow runoff across major river basins as threats to water sustainability. Water supply, quality and operations; hydropower; groundwater resources; flood control; recreation; and fish, wildlife and other ecological resources in the Western states remain at risk.

The report, which responds to requirements under the SECURE Water Act of 2009, shows several increased risks to western United States water resources during the 21st century. Specific projections include:

- A temperature increase of 5-7 degrees Fahrenheit by the end of the century;
- A precipitation increase over the northwestern and north-central portions of the western United States and a decrease over the southwestern and south-central areas;
- A decrease for almost all of the April 1st snowpack, a standard benchmark measurement used to project river basin runoff; and
- A 7 to 27 percent decrease in April to July stream flow in several river basins, including the Colorado, the Rio Grande, and the San Joaquin.

**These projections will have specific basin-level impacts that include:**

- **Southern California:** In Southern California, warming and population growth are projected to increase water demand, reliance on imported water and the use of groundwater in the area, leading to development of alternative water supplies, such as recycled water.

- **Colorado River Basin:** Reductions in spring and early summer runoff could translate into a drop in water supply for meeting irrigation demands and adversely impact hydropower operations at reservoirs.
- **Klamath and Truckee River Basins:** Warmer conditions may result in increased stress on fisheries, reduced salmon habitat, increased electricity demand, increased water demands for in-stream ecosystems and increased likelihood of invasive species' infestations.
- **Columbia and Missouri River Basins:** Moisture falling as rain instead of snow at lower elevations will increase the runoff during the wintertime rather than the summer, translating to reductions for meeting irrigation demands, adversely impacting hydropower operations, and increasing wintertime flood-control challenges.
- **Sacramento and San Joaquin River Basins:** Earlier season runoff combined with a potential for increasing upper watershed evapotranspiration may reduce the capacity to store runoff in Reclamation's Central Valley Project and state water resources reservoirs.
- **Rio Grande Basin:** Reduced snowpack and decreased runoff likely will result in less natural groundwater recharge. Additional decreases in groundwater levels are projected due to increased reliance on groundwater pumping.

"Reclamation, its customers and stakeholders have adapted to various climate conditions for more than 100 years," the Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner Estevan López said. "Now changing climate is creating a greater challenge; but through collaboration and cooperation, we will work to ensure a sustainable and secure water supply now and into the future."

While climate change poses significant risks to Western water resources management, Reclamation is already addressing vulnerabilities through adaptation strategies being developed with water managers across the West. For example, under the WaterSMART Program, collaborative basin studies evaluate the impacts of climate change and identify a broad range of potential options to resolve current and future water supply and demand imbalances.

Reclamation has forged collaborative relationships in 15 of the 17 Western states with a diverse group of non-Federal partners, including state water resource agencies, tribal governments, regional water authorities, local planning agencies, water districts, agricultural associations, environmental interests, cities and counties. These partnerships focus on identifying and developing adaptation strategies to address the vulnerabilities related to drought and climate change.

In addition to the new Report, the Interior Department launched an online tool enabling the public to visualize the regional impacts and potential adaptation options. The tool allows users to check, by basin, how temperature, precipitation and snowpack are projected to be affected by climate change and how climate change may affect runoff and water supplies. The viewer can also check the projected flow of a river at specific points and times of the year and display adaptation options.

The Report and visualization tool provides a five-year update on the river basins listed in the SECURE Water Act—the Colorado, Columbia, Klamath, Missouri, Rio Grande, Sacramento-San Joaquin and Truckee river basins— as well as other Western river basins.

During the White House Summit, the Administration announced new efforts and commitments from the federal government and more than 100 external institutions to enhance the sustainability of water in the United States. For more information, click [here](#).

The SECURE Water Act Report, fact sheets on projected climate change impacts on the eight western river basins, and the visualization tool are available at [www.usbr.gov/climate/secure](http://www.usbr.gov/climate/secure).

The Bureau of Reclamation is the largest wholesaler of water in the Nation. It provides more than 10 trillion gallons of water each year for municipal use and provides water to approximately 10 million acres of irrigated farmland that collectively produce 60 percent of the Nation's vegetables and 25 percent of the Nation's fruits and nut crops. Additionally, Reclamation is the largest supplier of hydroelectric power in the Western United States, operating 53 power plants that serve 3.5 million households.

## The Importance of Native American Tribes and Their Lands to Conservation Recognized with Nearly \$5 Million in Wildlife Grants

Grants to 29 tribes will further tribal-federal-state partnerships and restoration of key habitat for hundreds of species

**March 25, 2016**

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The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today announced nearly \$5 million in Tribal Wildlife Grants to Native American and Alaska Native tribes in 16 states. The awards will support 29 fish and wildlife conservation projects that benefit a wide range of wildlife and habitat, including species of Native American cultural or traditional importance and species that are not hunted or fished.

“Tribal lands protect some of North America’s most important remaining blocks of wildlife habitat, encompassing more than 100 million acres of land home to hundreds of native species,” said Service Director Dan Ashe. “The Tribal Wildlife Grants Program helps us work in partnership with federally-recognized tribes, state wildlife agencies and other federal government agencies to restore and sustain important habitat to benefit all Americans for generations to come.”

Since its inception in 2003, the competitive Tribal Wildlife Grants program has awarded more than \$72 million to Native American and Alaska Native tribes, providing support for more than 420 conservation projects. The funds have also provided technical and financial assistance for development and implementation of projects that benefit fish and wildlife and their habitats, including non-game species.

The grants have enabled tribes to develop increased management capacity, improve and enhance relationships with conservation partners, address cultural and environmental priorities and help train the next generation of conservationists by engaging tribal students interested in fisheries, wildlife and related fields of study. Some grants have been awarded to support recovery efforts for federally listed threatened and endangered species.

For example, Tribal Wildlife Grants funding has gone to help the Red Lake and White Earth Bands of Chippewa Indians reestablish the once abundant and culturally important lake sturgeon to the Red River of the North Watershed in Minnesota for the first time in nearly 60 years. Grant awards in 2006, 2009 and 2012 helped the tribes develop a sturgeon management plan and to stock thousands of sturgeon in Red Lake. The reintroduction program, implemented in partnership with the Service and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, has been a tremendous success, with lake sturgeon now being caught throughout the lake basin.

In Alaska, grant awards in 2014 and 2015 helped the Native Village of Tyonek develop a watershed action plan and replace a culvert on Old Tyonek Creek that opened up more than 10 miles of stream habitat for salmon.

And in the Southwest, Tribal Wildlife Grants have helped multiple tribes conserve bald and golden eagles, while maintaining their traditional religious practices. The Iowla Tribe of Oklahoma was the first Tribal Wildlife Grant recipient and today houses 45 bald and golden non-releasable eagles. The tribe has also rehabilitated 17 eagles and released them back into the wild. The Citizen Potawatomi Nation of Oklahoma also received grant funding to build an aviary, which currently houses 14 non-releasable eagles.

Finally, the Navajo Nation used grant funding to build an aviary, which is scheduled to open this summer. The aviaries allow the Tribes to care for eagles and rehabilitate those that can be released into the wild, while collecting naturally molted feathers for religious and cultural use.

The grants are provided exclusively to federally recognized Indian tribal governments, and are made possible under the Related Agencies Appropriations Act of 2002 through the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program. Proposals for the 2017 grant cycle will open May 2, 2016 and are due September 2, 2016.

A complete list of the 2016 Tribal Wildlife Grant awards can be found [here](#).

For additional information about Native American conservation projects and the Tribal Wildlife Grants application process, visit <http://www.fws.gov/nativeamerican/grants.html> or <http://www.grants.gov/>.

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*The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov).*

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
2016 Tribal Wildlife Grant Awards**

- ALASKA:** Native Village of Buckland (**\$200,000**)  
Tribal Beluga Management and Youth Education
- Hydaburg Cooperative Association (**\$136,935**)  
Prince of Wales Wolf Population Study
- Native Village of Napaimute (**\$75,114**)  
In-Season Fisheries Assessment
- Chickaloon Native Village (**\$179,574**)  
Matanuska Watershed Juvenile Salmon Research Project, Phase I
- ARIZONA:** Hopi Tribe (**\$200,000**)  
Ecology of Golden Eagles on the Hopi Lands in 2017
- Pasque Yaqui Tribe of AZ (**\$200,000**)  
Our River, Our Lives: Stabilizing & Recovering Threatened and  
Endangered Native Fish Species in the Upper Rio Yaqui Basin
- CALIFORNIA:** Hoopa Valley Tribe (**\$200,000**)  
Potential Impacts of Trespass Marijuana Cultivation on Tribal and Public  
Lands to Fishers, Spotted Owls, Mountain Lions and the Forest  
Environment
- Bear River Band Rohnerville Rancheria (**\$159,209**)  
Salt River Ecosystem Restoration Project
- Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California (**\$50,000**)  
Meeks Meadow Restoration
- COLORADO:** Southern Ute Indian Tribe (**\$86,836**)  
New Mexico Meadow Jumping Mouse Genetics, Habitat Associations and  
Behavior on the Southern Ute Indian Reservation

**IDAHO:** Nez Perce Tribe (**\$200,000**)  
Condors in Hells Canyon: An Assessment of Habitat and Threats to Successful Reintroduction

**FLORIDA:** Seminole Tribe of Florida (**\$200,000**)  
Seminole Tribe of Florida Tribal Wildlife Program

**MAINE:** Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians (**\$197,148**)  
Aquatic Habitat Restoration Program: Phase IV - Implementing and Planning Instream Restoration

Passamaquoddy Tribe - Pleasant Point Reservation (\$196,240)  
Tracking Alewife Population Changes in the St. Croix Watershed, Maine

**MICHIGAN** Saginaw Chippewa (**\$199,431**)  
Building Tribal Capacity to Manage Resources for the Next Seven Generations

**MINNESOTA:** Red Lake Band (**\$199,431**)  
Evaluation, Rehabilitation, and Tribal Youth Education of Lake Sturgeon in the Headwaters of the Largest Tributary to the Red River of the North in the United States

**MISSISSIPPI:** Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (**\$200,000**)  
Wild Pig Control

**MONTANA:** Blackfeet Tribe (**200,000**)  
Keeping Aquatic Invasive Species out of Blackfeet Waters

Crow Nation (**\$200,000**)  
Crow Nation Black-footed Ferret Reintroduction

Northern Cheyenne Tribe (**\$199,875**)  
Wildlife Management Plan & Traditional Environmental Knowledge Hunter Education Courses

**NEVADA:** Summit Lake Paiute Tribe (**\$200,000**)  
A Strategy to Promote Conservation of Greater Sage Grouse on Homelands of the Summit Lake Paiute Tribe, Northwestern Nevada

**NEW MEXICO:** Pueblo of Santa Ana (**\$199,968**)  
Wildlife Conservation on the Pueblo of Santa Ana Through Enforcement,  
Knowledge, and Habitat Enhancement

**OREGON:** Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians  
(**\$96,635**)  
Tenmile Lakes Basin Lamprey Conservation Project

The Klamath Tribes (**\$200,000**)  
Klamath Reservation Forest Habitat Restoration and Ecosystem  
Resiliency Project: Phase 2

Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde (**\$124,240**)  
Oak Habitat Restoration at Rattlesnake Butte Wildlife Area

**WASHINGTON:** Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe (**\$187,325**)  
Lamprey Re-colonization of the Elwha River Post Dam Removal

Sauk-Suiattle Indian Tribe (**\$187,400**)  
Mountain Goat Status in the North Cascades: Population Dynamics,  
Habitat Selection and Seasonal Movement Patterns in a Changing Climate

Muckleshoot Indian Tribe (**\$168,563**)  
White River Black Bear Study

**WISCONSIN:** Forest County Potawatomi (**\$131,795**)  
Conservation of Myotis species in and Around Tribal Lands

## Service Proposes Delisting Three Fox Subspecies on Northern Channel Islands Due to Recovery, Highlighting Historic Endangered Species Act Success

Fastest ever recovery of a mammal in the United States under the ESA

**February 12, 2016**

**Contact(s):**

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Representing the fastest successful recovery for any Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed mammal in the United States, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) today announced a proposal to delist three subspecies of island fox native to California's Channel Islands. The removal of the San Miguel, Santa Rosa and Santa Cruz Island fox subspecies from the Federal List of Threatened and Endangered Wildlife would be an historic success for the multiple partners involved in recovery efforts.

The Service is also proposing to downlist, or improve the status of, island foxes on Santa Catalina Island from endangered to threatened under the ESA.

Since the island foxes were listed under the ESA in 2004, the Service and its partners have worked to eliminate or greatly reduce the primary threats facing the subspecies, namely predation, disease and low population numbers. The best available scientific data now suggests that populations of these island fox subspecies have recovered to self-sustaining levels. To ensure that northern Channel Island fox populations remain secure well into the future, the Service is also proposing a monitoring plan.

“The remarkable recovery efforts of land managers and conservation partners over the past two decades on behalf of the Channel Island fox is the reason for this historic

recovery success,” said Dan Ashe, Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. “The speed at which these subspecies have recovered points to the strength of the ESA in focusing conservation attention and catalyzing recovery actions, and demonstrates what we can achieve together.”

On March 5, 2004, four of the six subspecies of island fox endemic to the California Channel Islands were listed as endangered following catastrophic population declines of over 90 percent, due primarily to predation by golden eagles on the northern Channel Islands and a canine distemper outbreak on Santa Catalina Island.

To halt the downward spiral of island fox populations, the Service partnered with the National Park Service, The Nature Conservancy, and Catalina Island Conservancy to launch a series of recovery actions that included relocating non-native golden eagles from the northern Channel Islands; removing the non-native species that provided prey for the eagles; vaccinating foxes against canine distemper; and breeding foxes in captivity and reestablishing them to the wild. The recovery effort also included monitoring wild island fox populations and reestablishing bald eagles to their historic territories on the Channel Islands. As a result of these strategies, the island fox subspecies on the four islands have shown dramatic improvement.

In March 2015, the Service released the final Recovery Plan for the four island fox subspecies, outlining proven methods for ensuring the subspecies’ long-term viability in the wild, including a golden eagle management strategy and disease epidemic response plan. In conjunction with the release of the final Recovery Plan, the Service also initiated status reviews of the four subspecies to determine if any of the subspecies warrant consideration for reclassification or removal from the Federal List of Threatened and Endangered Wildlife and accepted public comments.

“We look forward to continuing our collaborations with land managers and conservation partners on Santa Cruz, Santa Rosa, San Miguel and Santa Catalina Islands,” said Ashe. “Together, we will continue to monitor island fox populations to ensure their long-term survival in the wild.”

While data suggest island fox populations on Santa Catalina have also increased to historic levels, the potential for a disease outbreak remains an existing threat. Therefore, the Service recommends the subspecies’ status be reclassified from endangered to threatened, thus retaining ESA protections.

A copy of the notice of availability for the proposed rule and post-delisting monitoring plan will publish in the Federal Register on February 16, 2016, under docket number FWS–R8–ES–2015–0170, opening a 60-day comment period. The Service will accept comments until April 18, 2016. The proposed rule will also be peer-reviewed by academia in the field of conservation biology.

The proposed rule is available on our website at <http://www.fws.gov/ventura>. A limited

number of printed copies are available by request. You may request the documents or submit comments by any of the following methods:

- E-mail: [fw8islandfox@fws.gov](mailto:fw8islandfox@fws.gov)
- U.S. Mail: Field Supervisor; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office; 2493 Portola Road, Suite B; Ventura, CA 93003.
- Fax: Attn: Field Supervisor; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office; (805) 644–3958.

The Endangered Species Act is an essential tool for conserving the nation's most at-risk wildlife, as well as the land and water on which they depend for habitat. The ESA has prevented more than 99 percent of the species listed from going extinct, serving as the critical safety net for wildlife that Congress intended when it passed the law 40 years ago. In addition, the ESA has helped move many species from the brink of extinction to the path to recovery, including California condors, Florida panthers and whooping cranes. The Obama Administration has delisted more species due to recovery than any prior administration, including the Oregon Chub, Virginia northern flying squirrel and brown pelican.

*Established in 1987, the Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office works to conserve and protect threatened and endangered fish, wildlife and plants across the central and southern California coast, collaborating with communities and conservation partners to build a future that supports both people and our unique and diverse natural resources. For more information, visit <http://ventura.fws.gov> or follow us on [Facebook](#).*

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*The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov).*