

Awards for FY 2016 Announced September 15, 2016



The Service is awarding \$44.8 million in grants to 20 states to support conservation planning and acquisition of vital habitat for threatened and endangered species across the nation. The grants, awarded through the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund (CESCF), will benefit numerous species ranging from the coastal California gnatcatcher to the bog turtle in the northeast.

[News Release](https://www.fws.gov/news/ShowNews.cfm?ref=america%E2%80%99s-rarest-species-receive-$44.8-million-investment-under-e& ID=35803) [https://www.fws.gov/news/ShowNews.cfm?ref=america%E2%80%99s-rarest-species-receive-\\$44.8-million-investment-under-e& ID=35803](https://www.fws.gov/news/ShowNews.cfm?ref=america%E2%80%99s-rarest-species-receive-$44.8-million-investment-under-e& ID=35803)

[Full Announcement](https://www.fws.gov/endangered/grants/pdf/FY16.CESCF-ProjectDescriptions.pdf) <https://www.fws.gov/endangered/grants/pdf/FY16.CESCF-ProjectDescriptions.pdf>

Conserving the Nature of America

PRESS RELEASE

America's Rarest Species Receive \$44.8 Million Investment Under Endangered Species Act Grants Program

Funding to 20 states will help collaborative efforts to conserve America's most imperiled species

September 15, 2016

Contact(s):

Christina Meister, Christina_Meister@fws.gov, (703) 358-2284

In addition to providing regulatory protections that have successfully prevented the extinction of hundreds of species, the Endangered Species Act (ESA) also provides millions of dollars in funding each year for conservation efforts through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund (CESCF). This year, threatened and endangered species in 20 states will benefit from \$44.8 million in grants from the fund. Authorized under Section 6 of the ESA, the CESCF enables states to work with private landowners, conservation groups and other government agencies to develop projects that protect federally-listed species and their habitats.

"If our children are to inherit a world with something called a leatherback sea turtle, northern long-eared bat or California tiger salamander, we need to commit to conservation at every level," said Service Director Dan Ashe. "By strategically investing in projects that have a proven track record of success, we are putting our limited resources to the most effective use and building a sustainable conservation legacy."

"These grants will enable state fish and wildlife agencies to advance the stewardship of our nation's fish and wildlife resources," said Dave Chanda, President of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and Director of New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife. "We appreciate the strong ties formed by state agencies and their partners to protect these imperiled wildlife species and their habitats, which are critical to the on-the-ground success of these projects."

CESCF funding is provided through three competitive grant programs: the *Habitat Conservation Planning Assistance Grants Program*, which provides funds to support the development of Habitat Conservation Plans

(HCPs) that protect habitat for listed species; the *Recovery Land Acquisition Grants Program*, which provides funds for the acquisition of habitat in support of approved and draft species recovery plans; and the *HCP Land Acquisition Grants Program*, which provides funds to acquire habitat for listed species to complement approved HCPs.

The grants are funded in part by the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which was established by Congress in 1965. The fund promotes access to outdoor recreation resources for present and future generations by providing funding to federal, state and local governments to purchase land, water and wetlands for the benefit of all Americans. For the past 51 years, the fund has supported more than 40,000 conservation and outdoor recreation projects nationwide. President Obama proposed full funding at \$900 million for the Land and Water Conservation Fund in the Fiscal Year 2017 budget, and is pursuing full, permanent and mandatory funding for the fund's programs beginning in 2018.

Examples of Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 CESCO funded projects include:

The states of Minnesota, Michigan and Wisconsin will receive \$1 million under the *Habitat Conservation Planning Assistance Grants Program* to develop a multi-species Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) that will help researchers better understand the distribution and summer habitat use of local cave-dwelling bats, including the federally-listed Indiana and northern long-eared bats. The project will also help support sustainable forest management practices in the region, which in turn will allow public and private landowners to meet economic, ecological and social goals.

The state of Montana will receive \$2 million under the *HCP Land Acquisition Grants Program* to support the Whitefish Lake Watershed Project in Flathead County, Montana. A conservation easement on this Plum Creek property will help ensure vital habitat linkages for bull trout, grizzly bear and other federally-listed species.

The state of California will receive \$1 million under the *Recovery Land Acquisition Grants Program* to protect 240 acres of pebble plain habitat. This land acquisition will promote the recovery of several endemic plant species, including the federally-listed Bear Valley sandwort, ash-gray Indian paintbrush and southern mountain buckwheat.

The ESA provides a critical safety net for North America's native fish, wildlife and plants. The Service is working to actively engage conservation partners and the public in the search for improved and innovative ways to conserve and recover imperiled species. For a complete list of FY 2016 CESCO funded projects visit:

<https://www.fws.gov/angered/grants/index.html>. To learn more about the Service's Ecological Services Program visit www.fws.gov/angered.

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.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service FY 2016 Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund Project Descriptions

Recovery Land Acquisition Grants by State: 8 States funded for total \$7,642,949 (pg 6-8)

Arizona

EC Bar Ranch (Apache County) \$1,000,000. (13% of available funding)

The Arizona Game and Fish Department will use this grant to acquire a 310-acre tract along over three miles of Nutrioso Creek located in Apache County. This acquisition will primarily benefit the endangered New Mexico meadow jumping mouse and threatened Little Colorado spinedace. The proposed acquisition includes 111 acres of surface water rights, 45 acre-feet of storage water rights, 94 acres of an established conservation easement covered by the New Mexico Land Conservancy, and would connect to the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest at the north end of the property. The EC Bar Ranch supports the largest concentration of spinedace and perennial water on Nutrioso Creek, and to date, jumping mice are only known to occupy this reach of Nutrioso Creek.

California

Horseshoe Pebble Plain (San Bernardino County) \$1,000,000. This funding will be used to acquire and permanently conserve 240 acres of pebble plain habitat. Found only in the Big Bear and Holcomb Valleys of California, pebble plain habitat supports several small, endemic plant species adapted to the harsh, clay soils and surrounded by a sea of conifers. This acquisition will promote the recovery of several endemic plant species including the federally-listed threatened Bear Valley sandwort, ash-gray Indian paintbrush, and the southern mountain buckwheat.

Careaga Canyon Ranch (Santa Barbara County) \$750,000. The proposed acquisition will permanently protect three parcels on the Careaga Canyon Ranch property through conservation easements. This property contains habitat that supports sensitive species including the federally-listed California tiger salamander and California red-legged frog, along with a host of other rare plant and animal species. This is one of the largest undeveloped areas of riparian, oak woodland, grassland, and scrub habitats between existing coastal and inland natural areas of Santa Barbara County.

San Diego Vernal Pools (San Diego County) \$750,000. This funding will be used to acquire habitat to support the recovery of southern California vernal pool species. Vernal pools are seasonal wetlands that occur in specific soils and microtopography in Mediterranean-type climates. San Diego vernal pools provide essential habitat for five federally-listed endangered species; San Diego Mesa mint, San Diego button-celery, California Orcutt grass, Riverside fairy shrimp, and San Diego fairy shrimp, as well as the 7 federally-listed threatened spreading navarretia and Otay Mesa mint. In addition, the pools support a large number of sensitive and endemic plant and animal species.

Florida

Lake Wales Ridge Ecosystem Recovery Land Acquisition (Lake County) \$1,200,000. This grant will enable the acquisition of 12 acres of habitat to support the recovery of several federally-protected plants on the north end of the Lake Wales Ridge. Securing this site will protect

populations of Britton's beargrass and scrub pigeon wings in the northernmost portions of each plant's range. The tract also contains significant populations of Florida bonamia and scrub buckwheat. Small populations of the federally-listed threatened sand skink and gopher tortoise, a candidate for listing, have also been observed on the site. Lake County, with assistance from the Florida Forest Service, will manage the tract in perpetuity for the benefit of the rare plant species.

Highlands County Grassy Lake Scrub Tract (Highlands County) \$600,900. This grant will enable the acquisition of 55 acres of habitat to support the recovery of two federally-listed threatened skinks found in the scrub communities of the Lake Wales Ridge; the sand skink and bluetail mole skink. Additionally, the gopher tortoise, a candidate species, and four federally-listed pant species are also present on the property and will benefit from its acquisition and permanent protection. Highlands County and its partners will initiate proactive restoration of this site as soon as it is acquired.

Georgia

Raccoon Creek Headwaters Acquisition (Paulding County) \$1,000,000. This acquisition will assist in the acquisition of 700 acres and will permanently protect the headwaters of Raccoon Creek, located in north Georgia less than 25 miles from downtown Atlanta. This creek is critical for the long-term survival and conservation of two endemic and federally-listed darters; the Etowah darter and Cherokee darter. The area's mixed pine hardwood uplands and mature bottomlands also provide habitat for the threatened northern long-eared bat. Securing this site at the Raccoon Creek headwaters will protect a \$40 million investment by federal, state, and private partners to conserve the high aquatic biodiversity in the Etowah River basin.

Hawai'i

Kalua'aha Ranch Conservation Easement (Maui County) \$500,000. The Kalua'aha Ranch Conservation Easement on Moloka'i Island will permanently protect 969 acres to support the recovery of numerous endangered species, as well as minimize sedimentation of the near shore ecosystem and the Nation's largest fringing coral reef. Extending from near sea level to over 4,000 feet at the summit of the East Moloka'i Range, upper Kalua'aha Valley has high-quality native forest currently being degraded by feral ungulates resulting in increased sediments flowing 8 downstream, which smothers the reefs below. The Moloka'i Land Trust, The Trust for Public Land, and the Hawai'i Division of Forestry and Wildlife will permanently protect the upper Kalua'aha Valley via a conservation easement. Surveys of the property have documented three highly endangered native plant species -- one of them having fewer than 50 extant individuals. Kalua'aha Valley also provides habitat for endangered seabirds such as the Newell's shearwater that nests in extremely steep valley walls as well as the Hawaiian goose (Nēnē). The Kalua'aha Stream flows year round and ensures the vitality of the forest and its ability to absorb water will sustain the water supply and clean drinking water for East Moloka'i.

Iowa

Indiana Bat Summer Habitat Project (Mahaska County) \$250,000. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources will use this grant to acquire over 224 acres of habitat in Mahaska County for Indiana and northern long-eared bats. The habitat includes approximately 86 acres of mature forest and will be managed to increase the diversity of forest cover in that area. The acquisition will also provide connectivity to other protected lands in the area.

Michigan

Lime Lake Fen & Savanna Conservation Project* (Van Buren County) \$292,049. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy will use this funding to protect a 188-acre parcel of land in Van Buren County that contains essential habitat for the endangered Mitchell's satyr butterfly, eastern massasauga rattlesnake, a candidate for federal listing, and several state-listed species. The acquisition will permanently protect habitat associated with the third largest population of the Mitchell's satyr butterfly in Michigan.

Minnesota

Native Prairie Habitat Protection for Dakota Skipper (Pipestone County) \$300,000. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources will permanently protect 100 acres of prairie habitat to support the federally-listed endangered Dakota skipper and Poweshiek skipperling. The acquisition will also protect a critical seed resource for future prairie restoration efforts. The acquisition will be associated with the State of Minnesota's Wildlife Management Area.