

Fish & Wildlife Service – National Conservation Training Center
Endangered Species Overview
Candidate Conservation

[audio start]

NARRATOR: A Presentation of the United States Fish & Wildlife Service.

[Music]

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MARGARET HINSON: For me it was just an exciting opportunity to see how everything could work together and how you could pull these people together to actually put some conservation measures in place and make something happen that was real on the ground. So for me it was great.

ERIC DELVIN: We've just had a really -- well, I guess it's not so surprising -- just a very positive response of landowners. We have, I think, 20 private landowners on more than 300 acres that we're working actively on the ground doing restoration.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We're building partnerships with private landowners, with non-government organizations and with state and Federal organizations. That's the only way to be successful.

STEVEN PERRONOT: The initial preconception, "Oh, here comes another agency with additional restrictions."

But if you look at it in a positive way, we can do all this together. We can still maintain the training, enhance the land for future training, and work together. So I thought there was a good synergy there.

[Music]

NARRATOR: Every day Americans enjoy nature's beauty and abundance. But our rich biological heritage faces constant threats. Habitat loss, invasive species, pollution and other impacts endanger plants and animals. Congress passed the Endangered Species Act to protect and recover imperiled species and the ecosystems on which they depend. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service developed a variety of tools to help landowners voluntarily conserve species. Two of these tools, the Candidate Conservation Agreement, or CCA, and the Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances, or CCAA, focus on candidate and other at-risk species. Candidate species are plants or animals that the Service determine may need Endangered Species Act protection but are not yet proposed for listing. Voluntary actions to conserve these species can make listing unnecessary. These agreements can also include at-risk species that are likely to become candidates in the near future. CCAs are most frequently between the Service and other Federal agencies.

However, states, tribes and other partners also use this tool to address the conservation needs of candidate and at-risk species on lands they manage. A recent success story involves the efforts of partners enrolled in a CCA for the Camp Shelby burrowing crayfish. The threats to the crayfish and its habitat, located on land leased by the Mississippi Army National Guard in the Desoto National Forest, was reduced and as a result listing the species is now no longer necessary. The agreement gave the U.S. Forest Service and Army National Guard greater flexibility in their management efforts and training. A CCA for the Louisiana pine snake brings together multiple partners and land managers to provide benefits to the pine snake and other species.

TOM CLOUD: This is one of the first opportunities we've had to do a Candidate Conservation Agreement, do an interagency agreement working for the conservation of a candidate species. In Texas, to my knowledge, this is the first opportunity. This has been very encouraging in working with these groups. I think it's a good way of doing business. It's good for the Service. It's good for other agencies. It's good for the private landowner and the public to see that the agencies are coming together working cooperatively to try to conserve our species without having to go through a regulatory process.

RICKY MAXEY: Candidate Conservation Agreements are a wonderful tool. I think any species that is of conservation concern, particularly those species that the best science says are becoming rare, I think this is a wonderful tool to get started before things get critical.

CAL BAKER: The agreement benefits -- I mean, it's targeted to benefit the pine snake. The pine snake is an indicator of the pine ecosystem, long-leaf pine ecosystem in particular. When you focus on an ecosystem approach to management, when you manage to benefit components of that system, you end up benefiting other species associated with the ecosystem.

DR. RICHARD CONNER: If we want the species to be there for our grandchildren to be able to see, we need to be far more aggressive of how we interact both scientifically and politically to try and save the species.

GORDON HENDLEY: The breeding program is well established. We have through the zoo community what's called a species survival plan, which is a program for genetic management and capture propagation of the different species, and the Louisiana pine snake is one of them. We know very well how to breed them. We know how to incubate the eggs and how to hatch the offspring. So the program will work if we have enough genetic diversity to be able to replace these animals and if their habitat is there to put the animals in.

NARRATOR: CCAAs also address the conservation needs of candidate and at-risk species. These agreements are with non-Federal landowners, providing them with the assurance that they will not be required to do more if the species is listed. A CCAA between a local land trust and the Service for the Greater and Lesser Adams Cave Beetles addressed threats to these two species. Through the partnering efforts

under the agreement, the species are no longer candidates for listing under the Endangered Species Act. Let's take a look at two CCAAs involving the Idaho ground squirrel. The first agreement was with Soulen Livestock, a family-owned ranch. A second agreement invited multiple landowners to join conservation efforts across the entire range of the species.

MARGARET HINSON: For me it was just an exciting opportunity to see how everything could work and how you could pull all these people together to actually put some conservation measures in place and make something happen that was real on the ground. And so for me it was great. My family, I think they wondered at first what it was all about. The more they saw what was going on and met the people involved and everything, they've been very supportive. To me, what the benefit of doing these things are is, you know, there's several things. One, you're doing something good for a species. And I don't know of very many landowners that don't want to do good things for species out there. You develop some really good relationships with the agencies, and I think that's critical, especially if you're a public lands rancher. The best way to develop those relationships is to step forward and to work together. So you're better off to try and set the rules of the game ahead of time, and that's what Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances can do. That way you get to help, as a landowner, you're helping design the program that works for you on your lands, and you're doing it before a species is listed. And that's the best thing ever. And if you can do enough of those that you can keep a species from being listed simply because you have enough conservation measures in place, just think how important that is.

JOE HINSON: Most landowners are willing to listen, willing to learn, and they're surprised sometimes when they learn that there are part of the Endangered Species Act that can actually work for them rather than against them. If you can do all in your power to keep this from being listed, it's not only good for the ground squirrels, but it is good for the ranch simply because it removes the uncertainty that you have with a listed species. We were able to complete five additional ground squirrel agreements with landowners that also are well-known within the livestock community. That's opened some other doors. And, yes, it has helped those landowners because -- there's one individual, Jim Little, actually had a problem with too many ground squirrels.

JIM LITTLE: When they came along and said they're making these things a candidate for listing, my first -- I was really angry because we'd never seen them here. So I looked at this CCA program as an opportunity to -- by cooperating and getting involved in it that, should they become listed, then hopefully we've minimized the problems and the headaches that go with it. But I do think on balance that it's a good program to be in and I'm better for it than not.

JEFF FOSS: This species, the Southern Idaho ground squirrel, has 85% roughly of its habitat, occupied habitat, on private land. So it's critically important that we have appropriate conservation on private land. Ideally, if we can get conservation in place and make it unnecessary to list a species, in the long run that makes good business sense, I believe, for the government. It makes good business sense for a

private landowner in that they get certainty in terms of their own land uses. We work those in agriculture, livestock ranchers.

We work with those who have recreation interests in terms of their private land. Or just an individual that has land. I think in terms of working with our office, a landowner can expect that we're going to be upfront with them about the advantages of being enrolled in a program where they enter into a Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances. They can be assured we'll also identify the tradeoffs, because they do make conservation commitments, but in the long run, but if they want predictability in their land uses and contribute towards the conservation of a species, I think they see the incentive for themselves as well as being involved in a larger effort of collaborative conservation.

NARRATOR: An approach using a combination of both tools covers Federal and non-Federal lands that provide habitat for 11 candidate and at-risk prairie species south of Puget Sound in Washington State. Ft. Lewis, an army garrison, is participating through the CCA. While Washington State agencies, Thurston County, The Nature Conservancy and private landowners are participating in the CCAA portion.

ERIC DELVIN: This site is the Glacial Heritage Preserve, and it's a just over 1,000-acre preserve that's dedicated to conservation of prairie in oak woodland. The Nature Conservancy has been working in cooperation with Thurston County for almost 10 years -- actually a little bit more than 10 years now -- to restore the entire preserve for the benefit of prairie-dependent species such as the Valley silver spot butterfly, which is here, the Puget blue butterfly, which is one of the last populations is right here where we're standing, and other prairie-dependent species. The Candidate Conservation Agreement is complementary and supportive of the work that we're trying to do at Glacial Heritage Preserve with Thurston County. The Nature Conservancy will be a part of that agreement as well as Thurston County, and it formalizes regional efforts to recover these species by having landowners and agencies and other groups formally commit to recovering these candidate species, and Glacial Heritage in a lot of ways is a model for what other landowners can do in terms of the restoration actions for these species. One of the questions that I often get when working on a private landowner's property is, "Well, what happens if a species starts to live here after we restore the property, are there any risks associated with that?" And I think this Candidate Conservation Agreement is a great mechanism to be able to have in place for private landowners to utilize to ensure that they're not going to be -- their rights as a property owner aren't going to be negatively impacted by the work that they're doing.

STEVEN PERRENOT: The mission of Ft. Lewis is any mission of any military installation, is to provide combat-ready troops, soldiers, combat-ready units to go to war, and this mission requires a great amount of natural resources. When U.S. Fish & Wildlife came up and asked us to be part of their program in the Candidate Conservation Agreement, it was like hand in glove. It seemed to fit very well because we have the same type of goals. What the benefit of it is is the U.S. Fish & Wildlife has expertise in areas that we may not have, and we've got expertise in how we use the land and everything, and if you put that together, then you've got

a very successful program. The other advantage is it's a regional approach. It's not just Ft. Lewis. We're not an island here. If we want to protect the environment, we really have got to look at more than just outside the fence line of Ft. Lewis. Most of the time it surprises landowners off Ft. Lewis that you can combine the mission of the military and be conservative as far as land is concerned and being able to do that. Lot of times they can't put that in the same sentence, Department of the Army and conservation, as far as lands and natural resources. So, first of all, once they're over the shock to say, "Hey, the Army's doing this?"

Wow!" it comes in to say, "They're doing it, I guess we can do it, too," so...

We're trying to be very, very proactive in protecting the habitat of all these candidate species. We don't want to put them on the list because then by law we're required to put some restrictions on training lands, which would have an extreme negative impact in our ability to provide combat-ready soldiers.

TED THOMAS: One of the important components of the Candidate Conservation Agreements that we're putting together with all these landowners is the idea that they're working together collectively trying to plan for activities that will benefit the species, but we know that in the short-term we may not get it right the first time. So we're also including a monitoring and adaptive management component to these agreements so if that we don't get the management recovery actions correct the first time, we can go back, tweak it a little bit or make adjustments to try and improve upon the management that they're doing out on these properties. One of the beauties of the Candidate Conservation Agreement program is that it is a voluntary program. These landowners have not been coerced to come here. They're coming here on their own free will, and they want to get involved in doing conservation activities on their property because they think it's -- they know that it's the right thing to do. And they know that by doing these activities we may through these collective efforts of all these different landowners be able to preclude the need to list the species in the future.

NARRATOR: We've seen how landowners, agencies and organizations work together to remove threats and manage habitat so that species will not need the protection of the Endangered Species Act. With increasing help from private and public landowners, state and Federal agencies, tribes, conservation organizations, and businesses, we can work in innovative and cooperative ways to conserve species and preserve America's rich biological heritage.