

Washington Ecological Services

2024 in Review

As we move into another great year in Washington Ecological Services, I'm grateful for all of the hard work and dedication from our team to advance conservation for Washington.


The 2024 fiscal year saw important strengthening of our partnerships, both internally and externally. As discussed at our in-person all staff meeting in May, we seek to build a "team

of teams" within Washington Ecological Services, building relationships across zones in our state. At the same time, we also aim to bolster our relationships with external partners and other programs of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

Due in part to these strong partnerships, we achieved many significant, durable conservation results in 2024, including

the investment of over \$22 million for recovery actions in Washington.

I'm already looking forward to building on the accomplishments on the following pages in 2025.



Brad Thompson,
State Supervisor

2024 AT A GLANCE

CONSERVATION

 NORTH CASCADES
GRIZZLY
FINAL EIS AND RULE

2 NATURAL RESOURCE
DAMAGE ASSESSMENT
SETTLEMENTS
FINALIZED

**\$794,000 IN FUNDING
OBTAINED FOR
NATIVE SEED**

MT. RAINIER
WHITE-TAILED PTARMIGAN
LISTING
FINALIZED

OUR PEOPLE

OPENED
NEW OFFICE LOCATION IN
LACEY

7 IN-HOUSE
TRAININGS
HOSTED BY WA-ES

13 ONBOARDINGS
FOR NEW
EMPLOYEES OR
LIAISONS

FIRST IN-PERSON
ALL-STAFF MEETING
SINCE 2019

PARTNERSHIPS

OVER
\$22
MILLION INVESTED IN
RECOVERY
ACTIONS IN
WASHINGTON
DURING FY 24

JOINT BASE LEWIS-MCCHORD
BIOLOGICAL OPINION
COMPLETED

154 CONSULTATIONS
COMPLETED USING THE
SALISH SEA NEARSHORE
PROGRAMMATIC
BIOLOGICAL OPINION

10 LIAISONS
CO-AFFILIATED
WITH PARTNER
AGENCIES

BY THE NUMBERS

FY 2024

**SECTION
4**

\$1 MILLION+
IN RIP & CCP
FUNDING

26
RIP & CCP
PROJECTS
BENEFITTING
20 SPECIES

3
FIVE-YEAR REVIEWS
COMPLETED

**SECTION
6**

\$450,000
IN TRADITIONAL
SEC 6 FUNDING

\$1.1 MILLION
IN NON-TRADITIONAL
SEC 6 FUNDING

**SECTION
7**

14
FORMAL
CONSULTATIONS

61
INFORMAL
CONSULTATIONS

87
COMPLIANCE
CHECKS ON
PROGRAMMATIC
CONSULTATIONS

**SECTION
10**

8
APPLICANTS
DEVELOPING
HCPs or SHAs

1
NEW HCP
ISSUED

44
PERMITEES
IMPLEMENTING SEC 10
CONSERVATION
PROGRAMS

**PARTNERS
FOR FISH
& WILDLIFE**

\$250,000
IN NEW PROJECTS
FUNDED

238 UPLAND ACRES
5 WETLAND ACRES
.5 STREAM MILES
RESTORED

FOR EVERY \$1 SPENT,
\$7
MATCHED
BY PARTNERS

NRDAR
(NATURAL RESOURCE
DAMAGE ASSESSMENTS
& RESTORATION)

79
OIL SPILL OR
HAZARDOUS
MATERIALS PLANNING
ACTIVITIES

3
RESTORATION PLANS
FINALIZED

12
ACTIVE NRDAR
CASES

**FEDERAL
ACTIVITIES**

9
PROPOSED FISH
PASSAGE PROJECTS
ASSOCIATED WITH
HYDROPOWER

5
HYDROPOWER
PROJECTS ENGAGED IN
LICENSING OR
RELICENSING

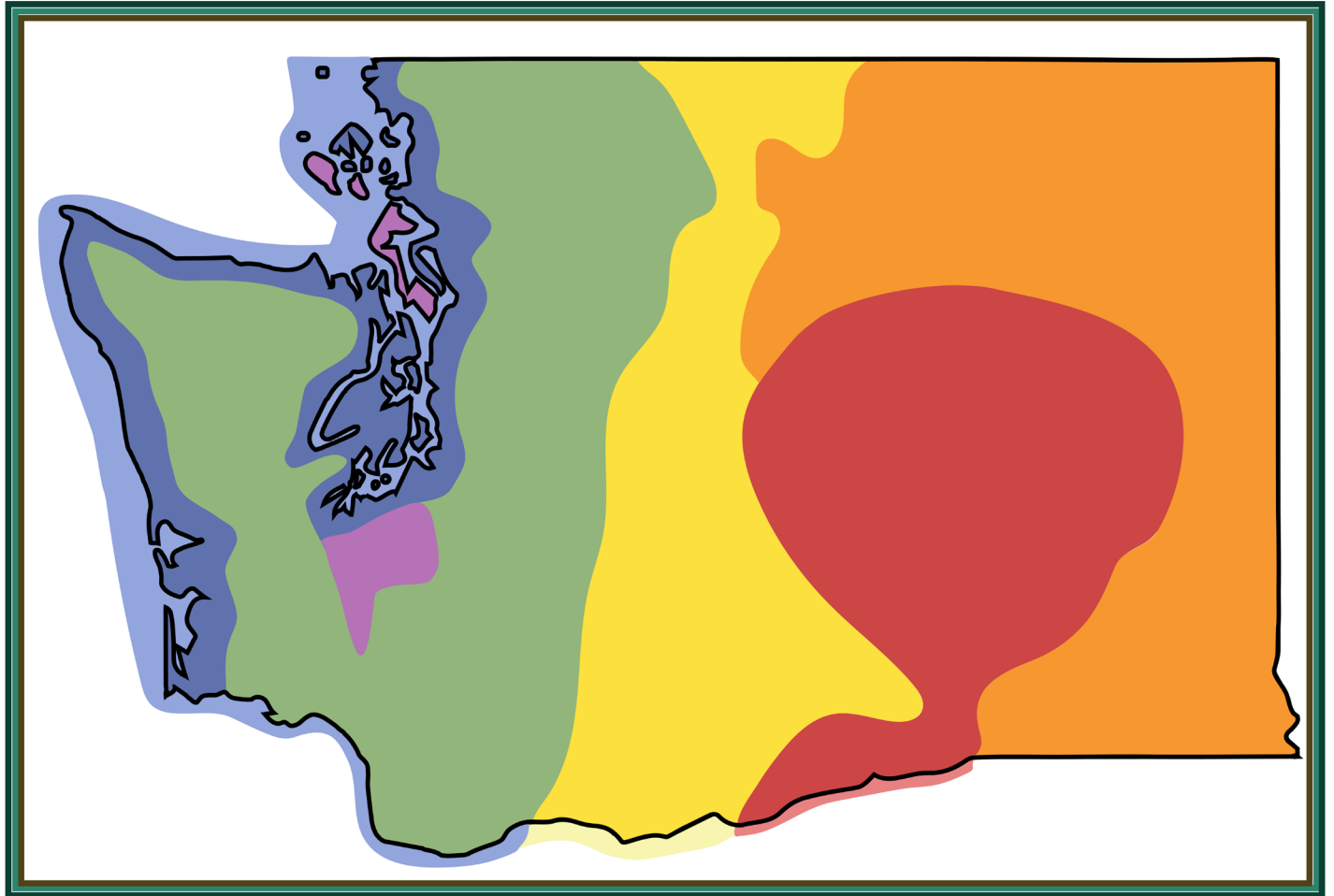
\$11.5 MILLION
IN REPI FUNDING
FOR MILITARY
INSTALLATION
PROJECTS

COASTAL

50.3
ACRES OF UPLAND
HABITAT
RESTORED

\$5 MILLION
IN NATIONAL
COASTAL WETLANDS
CONSERVATION
GRANTS

ACROSS WASHINGTON



- | | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| Eastslope Cascades | Coastal, Lowland, Aquatic, and Marine | Budget & Admin (statewide) |
| Inland Columbia Basin | Westside Forests | Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (statewide) |
| Shrub Steppe | Prairie and Salish Sea Islands | Coordinators (statewide) |

OPEN FOR BUSINESS! NEW LACEY OFFICE LOCATION

After pandemic and construction related delays, the new building for our Lacey field office officially opened for operations in early May.



WESTSIDE FORESTS

May the forest be with you! The Westside Forests Zone encompasses the forested and alpine areas of the west slope of the Cascades, the Olympic Peninsula, and southwestern Washington.

FY 2024 WSF HIGHLIGHTS:

- Published a Five-year Review for the marbled murrelet
- Continued status review, data collection and synthesis for the Cascade and Columbia torrent salamanders



The Westside Forests team in May 2024

- Finalized the listing of the Mount Rainier white-tailed ptarmigan as threatened
- Supported the design and development of three fish passage facilities associated with dams on the Lewis River
- Worked towards 90-day findings for the Olympic marmot and Makah copper butterfly
- Made significant progress toward a programmatic Biological Opinion that would cover the three national forests in Western Washington
- In collaboration with Federal and Tribal partners advanced fish passage proposals in the relicensing process for the three dams in the Skagit River Hydropower Project



A small Cascade torrent salamander found during a survey

- 11** INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS
- 13** FORMAL CONSULTATIONS
- 1** AMENDED OPINION

EASTSLOPE CASCADES

Covering the eastern slope of the Cascades, the Eastslope Cascades team's work covers a wide variety of species, ranging from carnivores, to narrow-range plants, bull trout, and more.

IN FY 2024, THE ESC TEAM:

- Participated in the integrated FERC licensing process for Rock Island Dam
- Worked with partners to plant approximately 750 endangered Wenatchee Mountain checker-mallow seedlings
- Supported the development of Critical Habitat for wolverine and Canada lynx

- Coordinated with partners across the Yakima Basin to ensure enough water is present for aquatic resources during a maintenance related drawdown of Kachess Dam, design the Tieton Adult Fish Facility, and ensure bull trout have continued access to water when water levels are low
- Further developed our partnership with the Yakama Nation to conserve bull trout and northern spotted owls
- Collaboratively developed conservation measures for Mount Rainier white-tailed ptarmigan, wolverine, and lynx

- 9** INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS
- 5** FORMAL CONSULTATIONS
- 45** PROJECTS EVALUATED UNDER PROGRAMMATIC OPINIONS



Members of the ESC team in the field

SHRUB-STEPPE



A two-week old Columbia Basin pygmy rabbit, approximately the size of a kiwi fruit

Habitat restoration is a high priority for the Shrub-steppe team. One of the team's biggest goals is to get the right seed, in the right place, at the right time. In FY 24, an interagency team consisting of NPS, BLM, and USFWS secured \$556,000 in Bipartisan Infrastructure

Law (BIL) funding for projects in Washington, including in the shrub-steppe:

- A "Seeds of Success" seed collection team
- Two seed storage facilities
- Expansion of the nursery at the Department of Defense's Yakima Training Center
- Shrub and forb plug growing through the Sustainability in Prisons Project

RESTORED
IN THE COLUMBIA PLATEAU THROUGH
THE PARTNERS FOR FISH & WILDLIFE
PROGRAM IN FY 24:

100
ACRES OF
UPLAND

5
ACRES OF
WETLAND

.5
MILES OF
STREAM



Previous seed collection for the threatened Umtanum desert buckwheat

OTHER FY 2024 SHRUB-STEPPE HIGHLIGHTS:

- Species Status Assessment and Five-year Review for Columbia Basin pygmy rabbit
- Funded five restoration projects for \$567,598 through Sage BIL including two projects with new partners
- Focused on improving partnerships through in-person site visits with staff from Refuges, Fisheries and Aquatic Conservation, Yakima Training Center, and local nurseries

SEEDING

CONSERVATION



The Shrub-steppe and Prairie teams worked together on several fronts for plant conservation. Together, they secured \$238,000 in funding to support DOI's Native Seed Strategy Keystone Initiative. This funding

supported a Washington Native Seed Coordinator to help increase native seed availability and build a framework for a statewide native seed strategy. The kick-off meeting for the Washington Native Seed

Strategy was attended by over 70 partners, producers, and experts. Additionally, team members were instrumental in securing \$3.4 million for the conservation of non-listed, at-risk plant species in the Western U.S., including 30 rare plants in Washington.

PRAIRIE AND SALISH SEA ISLANDS

Another action-packed year for the PSSI team featured the completion of recovery documents, a number of funding wins, and deepened partnerships.

IN FY 2024 THE PSSI TEAM:

- Completed the Taylor's checkerspot butterfly Recovery Plan, Five-year Review, and other documents
- Finalized the St. Martin's Habitat Conservation Plan
- Completed a new Oregon spotted frog habitat model



Members of the PSSI team planting camas with the Cowlitz Tribe

- Completed the first year of Oregon vesper surveys in Washington in support of the development of a Species Status Assessment

- Secured three years of island marble butterfly captive rearing funding and began implementing the first large-scale habitat creation project
- Kicked off North Salish Sea Taylor's checkerspot butterfly recovery implementation planning with over 30 regional partners

\$10.8 MILLION AWARDED TO THE JOINT BASE LEWIS-MCCHORD SENTINEL LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP FOR PRAIRIE CONSERVATION

BIPARTISAN INFRASTRUCTURE LAW

In FY 24, the BIL Team provided extensive pre-consultation support to the U.S. Forest Service. The team focused on:

- Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest's response to the wildfire crisis
- USFS programmatic actions
- Amendment to the 1994 Northwest Forest Plan

Concurrently, the BIL Team supported the important conversations, workgroups, and public commenting to highlight the importance of mature forest conservation for ESA-listed species like northern spotted owl.

FY 2024 BIL HIGHLIGHTS:

- Participated in the Wildfire Crisis Summit, where USFS, NMFS, and USFWS managers re-committed to collaborative solutions for ESA consultations
- Created a biweekly connection to support collaboration among local managers for USFWS, NMFS, and USFS
- Completed work with USFS on development of a programmatic approach to whitebark pine conservation

- Helped develop consultation streamlining tools for use by Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, including a forest-wide model of spotted owl habitat in Washington dry forests



USFWS/M. Acker
Members of the BIL and Westside Forest teams during a site visit.

BUDGET AND ADMIN

The Budget and Admin team is a critical part of statewide operations and in 2024, the team had some massive accomplishments that kept WA-ES running:

- Coordinated the move into new Lacey office, including furniture, IT connections, seating charts, and office space reservation system
- Hosted Financial Assistance Training Workshops to support all WA-ES project officers and set up a successful award season in which they established 42 new agreements and obligated more than \$4.5 million
- Organized logistics for our in-person meeting in May, bringing all 85 WA-ES employees together for the first time since 2019

- Internally collaborated and trained on FOIA and Litigation requirements to complete three significant requests under very tight deadlines
- Cross-trained on purchasing roles and requirements to establish additional support for IT purchasing
- Took over processing for the Salish Sea Nearshore Programmatic inbox and responded to approximately 200 consultation requests in FY 24
- Enhanced assignment routing features within Assignment Library and transitioned 100 completed S7 projects into our Records SharePoint

300+ BOXES

UNPACKED DURING THE MOVE INTO NEW LACEY OFFICE



13 ONBOARDINGS FOR NEW EMPLOYEES OR LIAISONS

200+ CORRESPONDENCE REQUESTS

300+ TRAVEL REQUESTS

42 NEW FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AGREEMENTS AWARDED

300+ PURCHASE REQUESTS

INLAND COLUMBIA BASIN

In FY 24, the ICB team worked to enhance partnerships to achieve shared conservation goals in eastern Washington, such as:

- Providing recovery funding to reduce human-grizzly bear conflict, advance understanding of Canada lynx habitat in the Kettle Mountains, and advance the Sullivan Lake bull trout introduction
- Initiating a new Level 1 streamlining process with the Colville National Forest to enhance communication, improve consultation processes, and strengthen our partnership
- Advocating for restoration projects that will improve bull trout habitat connectivity through the Snake River Salmon Recovery Board

- Furthering Spalding's catchfly recovery with the Palouse Conservation District through development of the Habitat Management Plan for the Steptoe Butte Key Conservation Area

CROSS-PROGRAMMATIC COLLABORATION

The ICB, Shrub-Steppe and East Slope Cascades teams launched an effort to reinvigorate relationships with other USFWS programs. Current ICB cross-programmatic efforts include:

- Spalding's catchfly recovery at Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge
- Sullivan Lake bull trout introduction with Fisheries and Aquatic Conservation
- Fairchild Air Force Base coordination with Refuges



Members of the ICB team with U.S. Forest Service partners during a site visit to Colville National Forest

OTHER FY 2024 ICB HIGHLIGHTS:

- Settlement Agreement with Seattle City Light at Boundary Dam securing future bull trout protections
- Compliance for 10 restoration projects benefitting bull trout
- Provided key support for grizzly bear communications in Washington state

COASTAL LOWLAND AQUATIC MARINE

The CLAM zone encompasses much of coastal Washington, including estuaries, wetlands, rivers, and floodplains.

FY 2024 CLAM HIGHLIGHTS:

- Completed consultation for the Puget Sound Chinook Resource Management Plan
- Finalized the Lake Cushman and Lake Kokanee Programmatic Opinion
- Settled a Elliott Bay and Lower Duwamish River NRDAR case valued at \$23 million and the Port Gamble NRDAR case valued at \$10 million
- Joined partners in the field to share information about bull trout research and work on the Elwha and Dungeness Rivers

THROUGH THE SALISH SEA NEARSHORE PROGRAMMATIC OPINION IN FY 24:

3,759	\$1.25
TONS OF CREOSOTE REMOVED FROM PUGET SOUND	MILLION IN NEARSHORE CREDITS

CLAM also provides support for 10 liaisons with WSDOT, Ports, and Sound Transit.

WSDOT LIAISONS COMPLETED:

- 10 consultations
- 18 consultations under programmatic opinions
- 19 fish passage projects, for 50+ miles of fish habitat

HIGHWAYS AND LOCAL PROGRAM LIAISONS COMPLETED:

- 18 consultations



Members of the CLAM team in the field in Olympic National Park

COORDINATORS

The Coordinators team brings together expertise and skills to support all WA-ES teams and help ensure a consistent approach to state-wide program implementation. The team serves as the centralized point of contact for the USFWS' Regional and Headquarter offices, while also providing program-specific expertise to WA-ES teams and external partners.



Partners for Fish & Wildlife 101 training in southwest Washington in April

WA-ES COORDINATORS:

- **Section 4 (Recovery)-**
Rose Agbalog
- **Section 4 (Classification)-**
Rebecca Migala
- **Section 7-**
Lisa Solberg Schwab
- **Communications-**
Andrew LaValle
- **Federal Activities-**
Betsy Gratton
- **GIS & Data Management-**
Markus Le
- **NRDAR/Contaminants-**
Michael Carlson
- **Partners for Fish & Wildlife-**
Nick George

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES DEVELOPED OR SUPPORTED BY COORDINATORS IN FY 2024:

- Three NCTC trainings
- FERC training
- Sec. 7 mitigation training
- Recovery permit training
- GIS story maps training

MAJOR PROJECTS SUPPORTED BY MULTIPLE COORDINATORS IN FY 24:

- Final EIS, Record of Decision, and 10(j) rule for North Cascades grizzly bear restoration
- Final Recovery Plan and other documents for Taylor's checkerspot butterfly
- Marbled murrelet and Columbia Basin pygmy rabbit Five-year Reviews
- Mount Rainier white-tailed ptarmigan final listing
- 1999 Mystery Oil Spill Draft Damage Assessment and Restoration Plan



One of the public meetings for the North Cascades grizzly draft EIS and proposed 10(j) rule

2024 ALL STAFF MEETING



In May, for the first time since 2019, Washington Ecological Services met in-person for an all staff meeting. Over the course of three days in Lacey, staff from across the state discussed statewide goals, heard about the work of their colleagues, and

recognized accomplishments. Staff also discussed building a "team of teams," to build bridges with colleagues they may not normally interact with and to enhance connections statewide.



Staff competed for glory during office olympics, including in classic events such as the pencil toss, barred owl and spotted owl identification, invasive species archery, marshmallow-spaghetti structure construction, and more.