

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Ecological Services Program**

FY 2016 Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund (CESCF) Grants
Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 15.615

Notice of Funding Opportunity

I. Description of Funding Opportunity

Because more than half of all species currently listed as endangered or threatened spend at least part of their life cycle on privately-owned lands, the Service recognizes that success in conserving species will ultimately depend on working cooperatively with landowners, communities, and tribes to foster voluntary stewardship efforts on private lands. States and Territories (hereafter, "States") play a key role in catalyzing these efforts. A variety of tools are available under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) to help States and landowners plan and implement projects to conserve species. The CESCF provides grants to States to participate in a wide array of voluntary conservation projects for candidate, listed, and recently recovered species.

Four grant programs are available through the CESCF; they include the "Traditional" Conservation Grants and the Nontraditional Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) Land Acquisition, Habitat Conservation Planning Assistance, and Recovery Land Acquisition (RLA) Grants.

"Traditional" Conservation Grants: The "Traditional" Conservation Grants program provides financial assistance to States to implement conservation projects for candidate, listed, and recently recovered species. Funded activities include habitat restoration, species status surveys, public education and outreach, captive propagation and reintroduction, nesting surveys, genetic studies, and development of management plans.

Nontraditional Programs:

- **Habitat Conservation Planning Assistance Grants** - Through the development of regional HCPs, local governments incorporate species conservation into local land use planning, which streamlines the project approval process and facilitates economic development. Established in fiscal year 2001, the Habitat Conservation Planning Assistance Grants program provides funding to States to support the development of HCPs. Planning assistance grants may support planning activities such as document preparation, outreach, baseline surveys, and inventories. Proposals for amendments to existing HCPs will not be accepted.
- **Habitat Conservation Plan Land Acquisition Grants** - The HCP Land Acquisition Grant program was established by Congress in fiscal year 1997. This program was designed to reduce conflicts between the conservation of listed species and land uses on specific parcels of land. Under this program, the Service provides grants to States for land acquisitions (both in fee simple and conservation easements) that are associated with approved (permitted) HCPs. The Service considers the use of Federal acquisition dollars by States

for habitat protection adjacent to HCP areas to be an important and effective mechanism to promote the recovery of threatened and endangered species.

The HCP Land Acquisition program has three primary purposes: 1) to fund land acquisitions that complement, but do not replace, Federal mitigation responsibilities contained in HCPs, 2) to fund land acquisitions that have important benefits for listed and candidate species, and 3) to fund land acquisitions that have important benefits for ecosystems that support listed and candidate species.

The HCP Land Acquisition program supports both single-species and multiple-species HCPs. For fiscal year 2016, 10 percent of the funding available through the HCP Land Acquisition program will be targeted to support single-species HCP land acquisition projects.

- **Recovery Land Acquisition Grants** - Loss of habitat is the primary threat to most listed species and land acquisition is often the most effective and efficient means of protecting habitats essential for recovery of listed species before development or other land use changes impair or destroy key habitat values. Land acquisition is costly and often neither the Service nor the States individually have the necessary resources to acquire habitat essential for recovery of listed species. Recovery Land Acquisition grant funds are matched by States and other non-Federal entities to acquire (both in fee simple and conservation easements) this habitat from willing sellers in support of approved or draft species recovery plans. The Recovery Land Acquisition program was established in fiscal year 2001.

As in previous fiscal years, in order to support high priority efforts of the Service and States, a process has been implemented whereby the Service Regional Directors are provided with 25 points total in each of the Nontraditional programs to distribute among project proposals to reflect the collective priorities of the States and the Service. We ask that the States and Service Regional Directors consider project readiness and how a proposal may address conservation in the context of climate change when assigning these points to a proposal.

The CESCOF programs are authorized through Endangered Species Act of 1973, 16 U.S.C. 1531 - 1534 et seq., as amended. The codified program regulations can be found at 50 CFR 81.

II. Award Information

For fiscal year 2016, the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund is funded at \$53.495 million, including \$9.485 million for Habitat Conservation Planning Assistance Grants, \$11.162 million for Recovery Land Acquisition Grants, and \$19.638 million for Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) Land Acquisition Grants.

“Traditional” Conservation Grants: The award announcements for the fiscal year 2016 “Traditional” grants will be determined by our Regional Offices. Funding is allocated by

formula to the Service Regions based on the number of species covered in the cooperative agreements with the States within that Region. Regional offices then further allocate the funding to the States within that Region by formula or through a competitive process. Awards for the “Traditional” Conservation Grants will be announced through regional press releases and direct notification of the applicant from the Regional Offices of the Service. An applicant should not initiate a project in expectation of CESCOF funding, nor should they purchase materials or begin work until such time as they receive the final grant award document signed by an authorized Service official. The Service awarded approximately \$11.5 million in fiscal year 2015 through the “Traditional” Conservation Grant Program.

Nontraditional Grant Programs: Funding for the HCP Land Acquisition and Habitat Conservation Planning Assistance programs is awarded based on a national competition. Following a regional “target” allocation from the Headquarters Office, funding for the Recovery Land Acquisition program is awarded based on regional competitions.

The Service awarded approximately \$37.2 million in fiscal year 2015 funding to Nontraditional Program projects through the CESCOF. Of that amount, approximately \$4.7 million was awarded through the Habitat Conservation Planning Assistance program to fully fund 11 out of 11 eligible proposals from 9 States. Approximately \$20.3 million fully funded 12 out of 12 eligible proposals through the HCP Land Acquisition program. The Recovery Land Acquisition program awarded approximately \$12.2 million in funding to 22 projects in 11 States. Information on the fiscal year 2015 grant awards can be found at:

http://www.fws.gov/endangered/esa-library/pdf/FY%2015_Press_Release_Statements%20Combined.pdf

The Service will make award selections for the competitive programs based upon the proposals submitted for consideration through this announcement. The range of grant awards has been between \$1,000 and \$24,000,000, but varies greatly by program. This year we are maintaining a \$2 million cap on HCP Land Acquisition grants and increasing the cap on Habitat Conservation Planning Assistance grants to \$1 million. The Service anticipates making award announcements for the fiscal year 2016 grant programs in fiscal year 2016 following final budget appropriations.

Awards for the nontraditional grants will be announced through a national press release and a memorandum to the Regional Directors of the Service for further notification of the applicants’ selection for an award. Notification of an award through a press release or letter from a Regional Office is not an authorization to begin performance. The final exact amount of funds, the scope of work, and terms and conditions of a successful award will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the prospective grantee and the Service’s representatives. An applicant should not initiate a project in expectation of CESCOF funding, nor should they purchase materials or begin work until such time as they receive the final grant award document signed by an authorized Service official.

III. Basic Eligibility Requirements

Eligible Applicants:

Participation in the CESCO programs is only available to State agencies that have a current cooperative agreement with the Secretary of the Interior. However, individuals or groups (for example land conservancies, cities, counties, community organizations, or conservation organizations) may work with a State agency that has a cooperative agreement on conservation efforts that are mutually beneficial, as a subgrantee.

The assistance provided to the State agency can include (but is not limited to) animal, plant, and habitat surveys; research; planning; monitoring; habitat protection, restoration, management, and acquisition; and public education.

The project must involve voluntary conservation efforts within the United States. As a voluntary program, we will not grant funding for projects that serve to satisfy regulatory requirements of the ESA, including complying with a biological opinion under section 7 of the ESA or fulfilling commitments of a HCP under section 10 of the ESA, or for projects that serve to satisfy other Federal regulatory requirements (e.g., mitigation for Clean Water Act permits). These funding restrictions do not apply to elements of HCPs that satisfy conservation obligations pursuant to State law or local ordinances that are above and beyond the Federal mitigation requirements for that HCP provided that such proposals identify that general funds, fees collected or used, lands acquired, or other conservation actions presented as cost share in the grant proposal satisfy the specific obligations of a State or other non-Federal conservation obligation of the HCP.

Federal law mandates that all entities applying for Federal financial assistance must have a valid Dun & Bradstreet Data Universal Number System (DUNS) number and have a current registration in the System for Award Management (SAM). See Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 25 for more information. Exemptions: The SAM registration requirement does not apply to individuals submitting an application on their own behalf and not on behalf of a company or other for-profit entity, state, local or Tribal government, academia or other type of organization.

A. DUNS Registration

Request a DUNS number online at <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>. U.S.-based entities may also request a DUNS number by telephone by calling the Dun & Bradstreet Government Customer Response Center, Monday – Friday, 7 AM to 8 PM CST at the following numbers:

U.S. and U.S Virgin Islands: 1-866-705-5711

Alaska and Puerto Rico: 1-800-234-3867 (Select Option 2, then Option 1)

For Hearing Impaired Customers Only call: 1-877-807-1679 (TTY Line)

Once assigned a DUNS number, entities are responsible for maintaining up-to-date information with Dun & Bradstreet.

B. Entity Registration in SAM

Register in SAM online at <http://www.sam.gov/>. Once registered in SAM, entities must renew and revalidate their SAM registration at least every 12 months from the date previously registered. Entities are strongly urged to revalidate their registration as often as needed to ensure that their information is up to date and in synch with changes that may have been made to DUNS and IRS information. Foreign entities who wish to be paid directly to a

United States bank account must enter and maintain valid and current banking information in SAM.

C. Excluded Entities

Applicant entities or their key project personnel identified in the SAM.gov Exclusions database as ineligible, prohibited/restricted or excluded from receiving Federal contracts, certain subcontracts, and certain Federal assistance and benefits will not be considered for Federal funding, as applicable to the funding being requested under this Federal program.

D. Cost Sharing or Matching:

A proposal must include a minimum 25 percent non-Federal cost share. The cost share may be cash or an in-kind contribution, such as volunteer efforts and donations of goods or services. This cost share requirement decreases to 10 percent if two or more States are contributors to the proposal and its activities as per Section 6 of the ESA. The Insular Areas of the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Government of the Northern Mariana Islands are exempt from grant matching requirements up to \$200,000 under all U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Grant Programs (based on a May 9, 2003, Director's Memorandum).

As defined in the Service Manual (521 FW 4.9), States may increase the rate of Federal participation from 75 percent to 90 percent of total grant costs when two or more States cooperate to conserve an endangered or threatened species of common interest.

Section 6 (d)(2)(ii), of the ESA, defines cooperation as "whenever two or more States having a common interest in one or more endangered or threatened species, . . . enter jointly into agreement with the Secretary." A cooperative action is one where two or more States work on a mutual problem. This may be an action outlined in a recovery plan for a species of multistate concern, an action outlined in a memorandum of agreement between cooperating States, an action described in cooperative grants, or an action outlined in a recovery implementation program.

The cooperating States may designate a lead State to coordinate with the Region. To seek an increased rate of Federal participation for a cooperative project within a grant, cooperating States **MUST** (emphasis added) provide the following documentation to the Regional Director with the grant proposal: Documentation of the cooperative action entered into by the cooperating States, which may be in any form (e.g., memorandum, letter of agreement, recovery plan, implementation program) that meets the needs of the cooperating States, provided it contains the responsibilities and work to be carried out by **EACH** (emphasis added) of the cooperating States. Examples follow:

(1) Either (a) one State submits an Application for Federal Assistance (SF 424) and a letter of agreement from another State sharing cooperative efforts, or (b) each State identifies the joint recovery action from the recovery plan in existing Applications for Federal Assistance (SF 424).

(2) Each cooperating State submits a proposal for the joint project and separate Applications for Federal Assistance (SF 424).

(3) When one or more States are participating in a recovery implementation program, one or more may submit separate Application(s) for Federal Assistance (SF 424) and certification that they are participating in the recovery implementation program, such as "The Colorado River Recovery Implementation Program."

Each cooperating State is responsible for submitting performance and financial reports related to the joint project, when they are actively participating in Federal reimbursement funding. Incomplete work by any one of the cooperating States may result in a recovery of Federal funds from all States, if it is determined that the joint cooperative objective will not be accomplished.

Documentation describing the role of each State in a multistate proposal must be provided with the proposal if the applicants are requesting a reduced cost share. We suggest that following example one or two above most clearly identifies the joint participation in a given project.

Management costs may be used as part of the State cost share for these grants provided that funds sufficient to cover the management costs for a specified time period are secured at the time the land or easement is purchased **AND** provided that the proportion of Federal funding provided for management does not exceed the proportion of Federal funding provided for the land or easement purchase. In other words, the amount of funding for management costs to be included as part of the grant, may not exceed the purchase price for the land or easement.

We cannot reimburse you for the time that you expend or costs that you incur in developing a project or preparing an application, or in any discussions or negotiations you may have with us prior to the award. Pre-award costs will not be allowed. We will not accept such expenditures of your cost share.

E. Other:

The following additional criteria apply to all CESCOF grants and **must be satisfied** for a proposal to be considered for funding:

A proposal cannot include U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) costs.

A proposal cannot seek funding for projects that serve to satisfy regulatory requirements of the Act, including complying with a biological opinion under Section 7 of the ESA or fulfilling Federal mitigation requirements of a HCP permitted under Section 10 of the ESA, or that serve to satisfy other Federal regulatory requirements (e.g., mitigation for Clean Water Act permits). An exception is granted for HCPs that include conservation obligations pursuant to State law or local ordinances that are above and beyond the Federal mitigation requirements for that HCP. Proposals may be submitted that include as non-Federal match general funds, fees collected or used, lands acquired, or other actions (e.g., other State permit requirements) to satisfy State or other non-Federal conservation obligations of the HCP, above the Federal mitigation requirement.

State administrative costs must either be assumed by the State or included in the proposal in accordance with Federal requirements. Grants may not be submitted to cover administrative costs alone.

Habitat Conservation Planning Assistance: To be eligible for funding under the Habitat Conservation Planning Assistance program, a proposal must meet all of the mandatory conditions listed below. If a proposal does not meet these conditions, do not submit the proposal for consideration.

1. Proposals involving ongoing projects will not be accepted for HCPs that have open CESCOF grants awarded in or prior to FY 2011. All CESCOF grants for a specific HCP planning effort awarded in FY2011 or earlier must be closed prior to the submission of an FY 2016 proposal for the same planning effort in order to be considered for funding. Service policy is to allow for up to three years from the date of obligation for the expenditure of CESCOF funds. Grants awarded in or before FY2011 are expired and will require an extension that must be approved from the Director of the Service.
2. For proposals involving an ongoing project, evidence of progress made to date must be provided. The proposal must discuss any prior CESCOF grant funding awarded to the HCP and the progress that has been made toward completion of the previous grant(s).
3. Proposals must include a list of discrete activities to be funded and each activity in the proposal must have an identified starting point and end point. Examples of discrete activities include developing public outreach brochures, gathering baseline data for an HCP, or preparing a draft HCP or associated National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents. For proposals involving an ongoing project, funding cannot be sought to support activities to meet deliverables that were identified for completion through prior year funding. For example, if a prior planning assistance grant was awarded to an HCP to complete a draft NEPA document, funding cannot be sought to complete a draft NEPA document in FY2016. However, funding can be sought to complete a final NEPA document in FY2016 unless this activity was specified as a deliverable of a previous grant award.
4. The proposal must be for activities to develop a new HCP. Proposals for amendments to existing approved HCPs will not be accepted.

Habitat Conservation Plan Land Acquisition: To be eligible for funding under the HCP Land Acquisition program, a land acquisition proposal must meet all of the mandatory conditions listed below. If a land acquisition proposal does not meet all of these conditions, do not submit the proposal for consideration.

1. The land acquisition complements, but does not replace, Federal mitigation requirements contained in the HCP.
2. The land acquisition must be associated with approved (permitted) HCPs.

3. Proposals involving ongoing projects will not be accepted for HCPs that have open CESCOF grants awarded in or prior to FY 2011. All CESCOF grants awarded in or before FY2011 under a specific HCP must be closed prior to the submission of an FY 2016 proposal under the same HCP in order for it to be considered for funding. Service policy is to allow for up to three years from the date of obligation for the expenditure of CESCOF funds. Grants awarded in or before FY2011 are expired and will require an extension that must be approved from the Director of the Service.
4. For proposals involving an ongoing project, evidence of progress made to date must be provided. The proposal must discuss any prior CESCOF grant funding awarded to the HCP and the progress that has been made toward completion of previous grant(s).
5. The specific parcel(s) to be acquired with the grant is/are identified. NOTE: Evidence demonstrating that the landowners are willing sellers (i.e., a letter or other form of written acknowledgment) will be required prior to transfer of funds.

Federal land acquisition grant programs fund the purchase of land at market value, from willing sellers. Market value must be determined by appraisals performed in accordance with the Uniform Appraisal Standards for Federal Land Acquisitions, and all other applicable laws and regulations. Appraisals are not required to be submitted with the grant proposals, but are required prior to expenditure of funds if the project is selected for funding. Please be aware that if an appraisal to Federal standards is not provided with the grant application, the amount specified in the award announcement will be based on the estimate of the property's value as provided in the grant proposal. However, the actual purchase price will not be greater than the current market value as determined by an appraisal completed to Federal standards and appraisal review completed to Federal standards. States or other non-Federal partners will be responsible for ensuring that appraisal and title work are completed. The cost of conducting an appraisal(s) and completing title work, in accordance with Federal requirements, must either be assumed by the State or a non-Federal subgrantee, or included in the total cost of the proposal.

6. The proposal must state a commitment to funding for, and implementation of, management of the habitat in perpetuity, consistent with the conservation needs of the species.
7. Only one proposal per HCP may be submitted. However, a proposal may include more than one parcel for funding consideration. For regional HCPs with subarea plans, please submit multiple acquisition proposals under the one regional plan title. The proposal must specifically identify the parcel to be acquired in order to be considered. We encourage you to include more than one parcel in the proposal in the event the transaction for the highest priority acquisition cannot be completed; subject to the outcome of fund reassignment procedures, funding of the next highest priority parcel acquisition identified in the proposal may be approved. In addition, acquisition of more than one parcel per HCP may be funded. If you submit more than one parcel for consideration in your proposal, you must include the relative acquisition priorities for each parcel, the price of each parcel, and the amount of the request (purchase price minus the non-Federal match)

for each parcel.

8. A proposal may not be submitted for funding consideration in both the Recovery Land Acquisition Grant Program and the HCP Land Acquisition Grant Program.

Recovery Land Acquisition Grants: To be eligible for funding under the Recovery Land Acquisition program, a land acquisition proposal must meet all of the mandatory conditions listed below. If a land acquisition proposal does not meet all of these conditions, do not submit the proposal for consideration.

1. Proposals involving ongoing projects will not be accepted for RLA projects that have open CESCO grants awarded in or prior to FY 2011. All CESCO grants awarded in FY2011 and earlier for a specific project must be closed prior to the submission of an FY 2016 proposal for the same project in order for it to be considered for funding. Grants awarded in or before FY2011 are expired and will require an extension that must be approved from the Director of the Service before the funds can be drawn down.
2. For proposals involving an ongoing project, evidence of progress made to date must be provided. The proposal must discuss any prior CESCO grant funding awarded to the project and the progress that has been made toward completion of previous grant(s).
3. Habitat must be set aside in perpetuity for the purposes of conservation (this can include easements deeded in perpetuity or other similar instruments).
4. The funds must contribute to the implementation of an approved final or draft recovery plan for at least one listed species. An exception will ONLY be made with sufficient justification, according to the following: (1) newly listed species where sufficient time (2 ½ years) for development of a recovery plan has not passed, (2) if the species is exempt from the requirement for development of a recovery plan, or (3) if a recovery plan has not been developed, but the species conservation planning efforts have identified land acquisition priorities. All exceptions will require a narrative justification.
5. The specific parcel(s) to be acquired with the grant is identified. NOTE: Evidence demonstrating that the landowners are willing sellers (i.e., a letter or other form of written acknowledgment) will be required prior to transfer of funds.

Federal land acquisition grant programs fund the purchase of land at market value, from willing sellers. Market value must be determined by appraisals performed in accordance with the Uniform Appraisal Standards for Federal Land Acquisitions, and all other applicable laws and regulations. Appraisals are not required to be submitted with the grant proposals, but are required prior to expenditure of funds if the project is selected for funding. Please be aware that if an appraisal to Federal standards is not provided with the grant application, the amount specified in the award announcement will be based on the estimate of the property's value as provided in the grant proposal. However, the actual purchase price will not be greater than the current market value as determined by an appraisal completed to Federal standards and appraisal review completed to Federal

standards. States or other non-Federal partners will be responsible for ensuring that appraisal and title work are completed. The cost of conducting an appraisal(s) and completing title work, in accordance with Federal requirements, must either be assumed by the State or a non-Federal subgrantee, or included in the total cost of the proposal.

6. The proposal must state a commitment to funding for, and implementation of, management of the habitat in perpetuity consistent with the conservation needs of the species.
7. A proposal may not be submitted for funding consideration in both the Recovery Land Acquisition Grant Program and the HCP Land Acquisition Grant Program.

IV. Application Requirements

To be considered for funding under this funding opportunity, an application must contain:

A. Application for Federal Assistance Form

A completed, signed and dated Application for Federal Assistance form. This form can be found at <http://apply07.grants.gov/apply/FormLinks?family=16>. Do not include other Federal sources of funding, requested or approved, in the total entered in the “Federal” funding box on the Application for Federal Assistance form. Enter only the amount being requested under this program in the “Federal” funding box. Include any other Federal sources of funding in the total funding entered in the “Other” box.

B. Project Narrative

The narrative description of your project proposal should specifically address each of the eligibility criteria described above and each of the ranking criteria included in the evaluation forms found in Section VI (Application Review.) Project descriptions that clearly address the specific ranking criteria in an organized manner will facilitate proposal review and scoring. We recommend the following format for the project narrative:

NEED: Why is the project being undertaken?

OBJECTIVE: What is to be accomplished during the period of the project pursuant to the stated need? (Specify fully what is to be accomplished within the time, money, and staffing allocated and specify end point.)

EXPECTED RESULTS OR BENEFITS: How will the project improve fish and wildlife resources or benefit the public? Try to provide quantifiable or verifiable resource benefits.

APPROACH: How will the objective be attained? Include specific procedures, schedules, key cooperators and respective roles.

LOCATION: Where will the work be done? Describe habitat type(s) to be affected and relevant ecosystem/watershed characterization.

ESTIMATED COST: Provide a detailed breakdown of what it will cost to attain each

objective of the proposal.

C. Budget Form

Complete the Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs (SF 424A) or Budget Information for Construction Programs (SF 424C) form. Use the SF 424A if your project does not include construction and the SF 424C if the project includes construction or land acquisition. The budget forms are available on the Internet at <http://apply07.grants.gov/apply/FormLinks?family=15>. When developing your budget, keep in mind that financial assistance awards and subawards are subject to the Federal cost principles in Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations Part 200, as applicable to the recipient organization type. Links to the full text of the Federal cost principles are available on the Internet at <http://www.ecfr.gov/>.

Multiple Federal Funding Sources: If the project budget includes multiple Federal funding sources, you must show the funds being requested from this Federal program *separately* from any other requested/secured Federal sources of funding on the budget form. For example, enter the funds being requested from this Federal program in the first row of the Budget Summary section of the form and then enter funding related to other Federal programs in the subsequent row(s). Be sure to enter each Federal program's CFDA number in the corresponding fields on the form. The CFDA number for this Federal program appears on the first page of this funding opportunity.

D. Budget Justification

In a separate narrative titled "**Budget Justification**", explain and justify all requested budget items/costs. Detail how the SF 424 Budget Object Class Category totals were determined and demonstrate a clear connection between costs and the proposed project activities. For personnel salary costs, include the base-line salary figures and the estimates of time (as percentages) to be directly charged to the project. Describe any item that under the applicable Federal cost principles requires the Service's approval and estimate its cost.

If Federally-funded equipment will be used for the project, provide a list of that equipment, including the Federal funding source.

The proposal must include a reasonably detailed budget indicating how the funding will be used and how each partner is contributing to the project. The proposal must also indicate the time commitment for maintaining the project's benefits.

The project proposal should also indicate whether partial funding of the project is practicable and, if so, what specific portion(s) of the project could be implemented with what level of funding. A project proposal that is a part of a longer-term initiative will be considered; however, the proposed project's objectives, benefits, and tasks must stand on their own as there are no assurances that additional funding would be awarded in subsequent years for associated or complementary projects.

Appraisals are not required to be submitted with the grant proposals, but are required prior to expenditure of funds if the project is selected for funding. Please be aware that if an

appraisal to Federal standards is not provided with the grant application, the amount specified in the award announcement will be based on the estimate of the property's value as provided in the grant proposal. However, the actual purchase price will not be greater than the current market value as determined by an appraisal completed to Federal standards and appraisal review completed to Federal standards.

Required Indirect Cost Statement: All applicants except individuals applying for funds separate from a business or non-profit organization he/she may operate must include in the budget justification narrative one of the following statements and attach to their application any required documentation identified in the applicable statement:

“We are:

1. A U.S. state or local government entity receiving more than \$35 million in direct Federal funding each year with an indirect cost rate of [insert rate]. We submit our indirect cost rate proposals to our cognizant agency. A copy of our most recently approved rate agreement/certification is attached.
2. A U.S. state or local government entity receiving less than \$35 million in direct Federal funding with an indirect cost rate of [insert rate]. We are required to prepare and retain for audit an indirect cost rate proposal and related documentation to support those costs.
3. A [insert your organization type; U.S. states and local governments, please use one of the statements above or below] that has previously negotiated or currently has an approved indirect cost rate with our cognizant agency. Our indirect cost rate is [insert rate]. A copy of our most recently approved rate agreement is attached.
4. A [insert your organization type] that has never submitted an indirect cost rate proposal to our cognizant agency. Our indirect cost rate is [insert rate]. In the event an award is made, we will submit an indirect cost rate proposal to our cognizant agency within 90 calendar days after the award is made.
5. A [insert your organization type] that has never submitted an indirect cost rate proposal to our cognizant agency. Our indirect cost rate is [insert rate]. However, in the event an award is made, we will not be able to meet the requirement to submit an indirect cost rate proposal to our cognizant agency within 90 calendar days after award. We request as a condition of award to charge a flat *de minimus* indirect cost rate of 10% of modified total direct costs as defined in [Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations Part 200, section 200.68](#). We understand that the 10% *de minimus* rate will apply for the life of the award, including any future extensions for time, and that the rate cannot be changed even if we do establish an approved rate with our cognizant agency at any point during the award period
6. A [insert your organization type] that is submitting this proposal for consideration under the [insert either “Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit Program” or “Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit Network”], which has a Department of the Interior-approved indirect cost rate cap of [insert program rate]. If we have an approved indirect cost rate with our cognizant agency, we understand that we must

apply this reduced rate against the same direct cost base as identified in our approved indirect cost rate agreement. If we do not have an approved indirect cost rate with our cognizant agency, we understand that the basis for direct costs will be the modified total direct cost base defined in 2 CFR 200.68 “Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC)”. We understand that we must request prior approval from the Service to use the MTDC base instead of the base identified in our approved indirect cost rate agreement, and that Service approval of such a request will be based on: 1) a determination that our approved base is only a subset of the MTDC (such as salaries and wages); and 2) that use of the MTDC base will still result in a reduction of the total indirect costs to be charged to the award. In accordance with 2 CFR 200.405, we understand that indirect costs not recovered due to a voluntary reduction to our federally negotiated rate are not allowable for recovery via any other means.

7. A [insert your organization type] that will charge all costs directly.

All applicants are hereby notified of the following:

- Recipients without an approved indirect cost rate are prohibited from charging indirect costs to a Federal award. Accepting the 10% *de minimus* rate as a condition of award is an approved rate.
- Failure to establish an approved rate during the award period renders all costs otherwise allocable as indirect costs unallowable under the award.
- Only the indirect costs calculated against the Federal portion of the total direct costs may be charged to the Federal award. Recipients may not charge to their Service award any indirect costs calculated against the portion of total direct costs charged to themselves or charged to any other project partner, Federal and non-Federal alike.
- Recipients must have prior written approval from the Service to transfer unallowable indirect costs to amounts budgeted for direct costs or to satisfy cost-sharing or matching requirements under the award.
- Recipients are prohibited from shifting unallowable indirect costs to another Federal award unless specifically authorized to do so by legislation.”

Applicants who are individuals applying for funds separate from a business or non-profit organization he/she may operate are not eligible to charge indirect costs to their award. If you are an individual applying for funding, do not include any indirect costs in your proposed budget.

For more information on indirect cost rates, see the Service’s **Indirect Costs and Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreements** guidance document on the Internet at <http://www.fws.gov/grants/>.

Negotiating an Indirect Cost Rate with the Department of the Interior: Entities that do not have a NICRA must first have an open, active Federal award before they can submit an indirect cost rate proposal to their cognizant agency. The Federal awarding agency that provides the largest amount of direct funding to your organization is your cognizant agency, unless otherwise assigned by the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB). If

the Department of the Interior is your cognizant agency, your indirect cost rate will be negotiated by the Interior Business Center (IBC). For more information, contact the IBC at:

Indirect Cost Services

Acquisition Services Directorate, Interior Business Center

U.S. Department of the Interior

2180 Harvard Street, Suite 430

Sacramento, CA 95815

Phone: 916-566-7111

Email: ics@nbc.gov

Internet address: http://www.doi.gov/ibc/services/Indirect_Cost_Services/index.cfm

- E. Single Audit Reporting Statements:** As required in [Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations Part 200](#), Subpart F, all U.S. states, local governments, federally-recognized Indian tribal governments, and non-profit organizations expending \$750,000 USD or more in Federal award funds in a fiscal year must submit a Single Audit report for that year through the Federal Audit Clearinghouse's Internet Data Entry System. All U.S. state, local government, federally-recognized Indian tribal government and non-profit applicants must provide a statement regarding if your organization was/was not required to submit a Single Audit report for the organization's most recently closed fiscal year and, if so, state if that report is available on the Federal Audit Clearinghouse Single Audit Database website (<http://harvester.census.gov/sac/>) and provide the EIN under which that report was submitted. Include these statements at the end of the Project Narrative in a section titled "**Single Audit Reporting Statements**".
- F. Assurances:** Include the appropriate signed and dated Assurances form available online at <http://apply07.grants.gov/apply/FormLinks?family=15>. Use the **Assurances for Construction Programs (SF 424D)** for construction and land acquisition projects. Use the **Assurances for Non-Construction Programs (SF 424B)** for all other projects. Signing this form does not mean that all items on the form are applicable. The form contains language that states that some of the assurances may not be applicable to your organization and/or your project or program.
- G. Certification and Disclosure of Lobbying Activities:** Under Title 31 of the United States Code, Section 1352, an applicant or recipient must not use any federally appropriated funds (both annually appropriated and continuing appropriations) or matching funds under a grant or cooperative agreement award to pay any person for lobbying in connection with the award. Lobbying is defined as influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress connection with the award. Submission of an application also represents the applicant's certification of the statements in 43 CFR Part 18, Appendix A-Certification Regarding Lobbying. If you/your organization have/has made or agrees to make any payment using non-appropriated funds for lobbying in connection with this proposal AND the Federal share exceeds \$100,000, complete and submit the **SF LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities** form. See 43 CFR, Subpart 18.100 for more information on when additional submission of this form is required.

H. Conflict of Interest Disclosures: Applicants must notify the Service in writing of any actual or potential conflicts of interest that are known at the time of application or that may arise during the life of this award, in the event an award is made. Conflicts of interest include any relationship or matter which might place the recipient, the recipient's employees, or the recipient's subrecipients in a position of conflict, real or apparent, between their responsibilities under the award and any other outside interests. Conflicts of interest may also include, but are not limited to, direct or indirect financial interests, close personal relationships, positions of trust in outside organizations, consideration of future employment arrangements with a different organization, or decision-making affecting the award that would cause a reasonable person with knowledge of the relevant facts to question the impartiality of the applicant, the applicant's employees, or the applicant's future subrecipients in the matter. Upon receipt of such a notice, the Service Project Officer in consultation with their Ethics Counselor will determine if a conflict of interest exists and, if so, if there are any possible actions to be taken by the applicant to reduce or resolve the conflict. Failure to resolve conflicts of interest in a manner that satisfies the Service may result in the project not being select for funding.

Application Checklist

- SF 424, Application for Federal Assistance:** A complete, signed and dated SF 424, SF 424-Mandatory, or SF 424-Individual form.
- Project narrative**
- Single Audit Reporting statement:** If a U.S. state, local government, federally-recognized Indian tribal government, or non-profit organization, statements regarding applicability of and compliance with Single Audit reporting requirements.
- SF 424 budget form:** A complete SF 424A or SF 424C Budget Information form.
- Budget justification**
- Federally-funded equipment list:** If Federally-funded equipment will be used for the project, a list of that equipment.
- NICRA:** When applicable, a copy of the organization's current Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement.
- SF 424 Assurances form:** Signed and dated SF 424B or SF 424D Assurances form.
- SF LLL form:** If applicable, completed SF-LLL Disclosure of Lobbying Activities form.
- Conflict of Interest statement,** when applicable.

Failure to provide complete information may cause delays, postponement, or rejection of the application.

V. Submission Instructions **SUBMISSION DEADLINE:**

“Traditional” Conservation Grants: Service Regional Offices will independently set submission dates and times for the “Traditional” Conservation Grant Program. You should contact the Regional Program Coordinator listed in Section VIII (Agency Contacts) for further information regarding “Traditional” Conservation Grant submission dates and times.

Nontraditional Grants: Grant project proposals submitted by hardcopy must be received by the appropriate Regional Program Coordinator listed in Section VIII by March 18, 2016. The proposals must be received at the appropriate office by 5:00 pm in that time zone. To confirm the receipt of your proposal, you must contact the Regional Program Coordinator listed in Section VIII.

Grant project proposals submitted electronically through the Grants.gov internet site must be received by March 18, 2016. Applicants will receive notice electronically through Grants.gov to confirm receipt of the proposal. Applicants are responsible for ensuring proposals are successfully submitted via Grants.gov. If applicants do not receive a confirmation receipt, they should seek assistance from support staff at Grants.gov by visiting <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/support.html> or by calling 1-800-518-4726. Proposals not received by the date provided above will not be reviewed nor considered as eligible for the competition.

Intergovernmental Review: Before submitting an application, U.S. state and local government applicants should visit the following website (http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_spoc/) to determine whether their application is subject to the state intergovernmental review process under Executive Order (E.O.) 12372 “Intergovernmental review of Federal Programs.” E.O. 12372 was issued to foster the intergovernmental partnership and strengthen federalism by relying on state and local processes for the coordination and review of proposed Federal financial assistance and direct Federal development. The E.O. allows each state to designate an entity to perform this function. The official list of designated entities is posted on the website. Contact your state’s designated entity for more information on the process the state requires to be followed when applying for assistance. States that do not have a designated entity listed on the website have chosen not to participate in the review process.

While the Service will accept both hard copy and electronic submissions of proposals, we strongly encourage States and Territories to submit their applications electronically through www.Grants.gov. Electronic submission will facilitate in the timely review and processing of applications and assist the Service in meeting its goal to obligate CESCO/Section 6 funds within 120 days of the award announcement. Applications must be submitted electronically through www.Grants.gov or by mail to the appropriate Regional Office as indicated in Section VIII. We will ONLY accept electronic applications that are submitted through the Grants.gov Internet site. We will not accept any other form of electronic application.

Download the Application Package linked to this Funding Opportunity on Grants.gov to begin the application process. Downloading and saving the Application Package to your computer makes the required government-wide standard forms fillable and printable. Please select **ONE** of the submission options described below.

To submit an application by mail:

For hard copy application submissions, your project proposal must: 1) not be bound in any manner (except by a single binder clip); 2) not be submitted by facsimile; 3) be printed on only one side of the paper; 4) include page numbers; 5) not include any paper larger than 8.5 by 11 inches; 6) include one signed original and two signed copies of the Application for Federal Assistance (SF 424) and supporting information; 7) be received by the appropriate Regional Office listed in Section VIII by March 18, 2016.

To submit an application through Grants.gov:

For electronic application submission through the Grants.gov internet site (www.grants.gov), you must follow all instructions provided by Grants.gov to ensure that your electronic application is received by March 18, 2016. We will ONLY accept electronic applications that are submitted through the Grants.gov internet site. We will not accept any other form of electronic application. For applicants that intend to apply electronically through Grants.gov, we highly recommend that you begin your application process well in advance of the closing date for submission of applications. The application process through Grants.gov requires that applicants complete a registration process and requires that all materials submitted are completely and accurately filled out. Registration can take between three to five business days, or as long as two weeks if all steps are not completed in a timely manner.

Important note on Grants.gov application attachment file names: Please do not assign application attachments file names longer than 20 characters, including spaces. Assigning file names longer than 20 characters will create issues in the automatic interface between Grants.gov and the Service's financial assistance management system.

We encourage you to contact the Regional Program Coordinator listed in Section VIII prior to submitting a project proposal if you have questions regarding what information must be submitted with the project proposal. An incomplete proposal will not be considered for funding

VI. Application Review

Criteria: To be considered for funding, applications must be submitted by a State agency with an approved cooperative agreement with the Secretary of the Interior. Individual project proposals will compete with other State submissions for funding.

The project selection process for "Traditional" Conservation Grants is generally conducted by Service Ecological Services staff in conjunction with the States.

The following ranking criteria will be used by Regional Office staff to evaluate Nontraditional grant project proposals. **Proposals should be submitted with the ranking criteria, as described below, in mind. Project narratives that clearly address the specific ranking criteria in an organized manner will facilitate proposal review and scoring.**

**HABITAT CONSERVATION PLANNING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
FISCAL YEAR 2016 EVALUATION FORM**

FWS Regional Staff: Please fill out this form completely. You may attach additional written explanations for the categories in this form if the space provided is inadequate.

Project Title _____

Region _____

State(s) _____

HCP name (As entered in ECOS) _____

Service contact for more information _____

Estimated total cost of proposal _____

Percent of cost to be borne by non-Federal entities (list by entity and % of cost) _____

Amount of funding requested (total cost minus the non-Federal match) _____

Regional priority points for this proposal* _____ (0 – 25 points)

* Each Region will have 25 points to distribute to the eligible Habitat Conservation Planning Assistance grant proposals. That is, 25 points for all eligible proposals, not for each eligible proposal. The 25 points may be applied to grant proposal scores in any amount deemed appropriate by the Regional Director to reflect the Service and State priorities for funding. Please consider project readiness and conservation in the context of climate change when applying these discretionary points.

Justification for Regional priority _____

Total points available = 100 points + _____ Regional priority pts (maximum 125 points)

SPECIES BENEFITS

The purpose of this section is to evaluate how beneficial the proposal will be to listed and unlisted species proposed to be covered by the HCP. A covered species is any species (listed or unlisted) that is proposed to be identified on the section 10(a)(1)(B) permit.

Federally listed species are defined as those species listed as threatened or endangered by the Federal Government through section 4 of the Endangered Species Act. Unlisted species include candidate, proposed, State listed and all other species.

1) Planning efforts that will benefit more species will score higher. Both listed and unlisted species that are proposed to be covered by the HCP will be considered.

Score: Number of species proposed to be covered by the HCP (listed on the permit) (provides more weight for including unlisted species) (15 pts maximum)

- ___ 1 species (1 pt)
- ___ 2-5 species (5 pts)
- ___ 6-10 species (10 pts)
- ___ 11+ species (15 pts)

Justification (identify species):

2) Planning efforts for HCPs that will provide greater benefit to covered species (both listed and unlisted) will score higher. This factor should be scored based on benefits to the individual species as opposed to the aggregate. HCP planning efforts with a focus on climate change adaptation should be addressed here to identify the conservation benefits to be derived by avoiding or offsetting climate change impacts, thereby reducing or eliminating the threats to species proposed to be covered.

High benefit to conservation: The benefits to species will be considered **high**, if through the HCP planning effort,

- 75% or greater of the species' range-wide habitat or an essential piece of habitat will be protected; or
- a major population necessary for recovery may be protected; or
- a source population that provides individuals for future emigration is protected; or
- major threats to the species will be eliminated.

Low benefit to conservation: The benefits to species will be considered **low**, if through the HCP planning effort, only a small percentage (20% or less) of the species' range-wide habitat will be protected, individual populations(s) to be covered contribute little to the overall recovery of the species, and/or threats to the covered species are not imminent.

To facilitate in the review process, you may consider including a table identifying ALL of the species proposed to be covered by the HCP, the expected benefit to the species, the degree of benefit (low, medium, high,) and justification for the degree of benefit designated. An example is shown below.

Score: Amount of benefit the HCP will potentially provide to species proposed to be covered. (To score maximum points, the applicant must document that the HCP will potentially result in a major benefit to at least one species. 15 pts maximum)

- ___ Low benefit to conservation (5 pt)
- ___ Medium benefit to conservation (10 pts)
- ___ High benefit to conservation (15 pts)

Covered Species	Expected Benefit	Degree of Benefit (low, medium, high)	Justification
Longhorn fairy shrimp	Preservation of essential vernal pool habitat	High	The HCP will cover 80% of the species range-wide habitat.

Justification:

Total points for species benefits (sum of 1-2): _____

ECOSYSTEM BENEFITS

The purpose of this section is to evaluate how beneficial the proposed HCP will be for the covered species (listed and unlisted.)

3) Lands that require little or no management to provide benefits for covered species will score higher in this evaluation factor. The level of management expected to be necessary is based on an evaluation of the biotic and abiotic components and ecological processes. Biotic factors include the structure and composition of plant and animal communities. Abiotic factors include soil, hydrology, natural topography, and salinity gradients. Ecological processes include succession, trophic energy flows, and disturbance regimes.

Score: When considered in the context of the surrounding landscape, the HCP plan area contains _____ of the naturally occurring biotic and abiotic components and ecological processes necessary to maintain a fully functioning ecosystem that contains the habitat necessary to support the covered species and other non-covered species associated with that ecosystem. (15 pts maximum)

More points will be awarded for HCP plan areas with fully-functioning ecosystems that will require little or no restoration/management to benefit the covered species.

- _____ None: few ecological processes intact and/or substantial restoration needed (0 pts)
- _____ Some/Most: most core ecological processes intact (8 pts)
- _____ All: pristine ecological processes intact (15 pts)

Justification:

4) Plan areas for developing HCPs that cover a large area are more likely to consider landscape-level or ecosystem-level planning issues. This type of regional planning benefits numerous species within an ecosystem while streamlining ESA compliance for the smaller landowners within the planning area.

Score: Size of plan area to be covered by the HCP (provides more weight for large plan areas) (15 pts maximum)

- ___ 0-100 acres (1 pt)
- ___ 101-1,000 acres (5 pts)
- ___ 1,001-10,000 acres (10 pts)
- ___ 10,001+ acres (15 pts)

Total points for ecosystem benefits (sum of 3-4): _____

FOSTERING HCP PARTNERSHIPS

The purpose of this section is to emphasize the importance of involving stakeholders in the development of the HCP. This section includes consideration of the number of partners and the amount of cost share contributions.

5) Proposals with a larger number of stakeholders involved in the development of the HCP will score higher. Stakeholders are public or private entities that will play a significant role in the development of the HCP, that is, entities that participate on the HCP steering committee or that will make a contribution in the scoping for, and preparation of, the HCP. The Service, the State agency applying for the grant, and consultants or consulting firms who are preparing the HCP should not be counted. Please identify **each** stakeholder as well as the **specific contribution** to be made by each stakeholder. To facilitate in the review process, you may consider using a chart

similar to the example provided below. Please note: points will not be awarded for stakeholders listed without identifying their specific contributions to the project.

Score: Number of stakeholders involved in the development of the HCP. (20 pts maximum)

- ___ 1-5 stakeholders (5 pts)
- ___ 6-10 stakeholders (10 pts)
- ___ Greater than 10 stakeholders (20 pts)

Stakeholder/Partner Name	Role	Contribution (cash or in-kind)
Non-Governmental Organization X	Preparation of draft NEPA documents	\$75,000, Staff biologist (in-kind)

List each stakeholder and specifically describe the stakeholder's role in development of the HCP:

6) Commitment to the successful development of an HCP can be evidenced by cost share contributions. Cost share is the percent of the total project cost that will be provided by non-Federal partners. Proposals that include a greater than minimum cost share contribution will be ranked higher. When both the State and local governments are involved, cost sharing by both governments is preferred.

Score: Percentage of cost share provided by non-Federal partners. Rounding of the dollar amounts and/or percentages is not acceptable to meet the minimum cost share requirement or to receive additional points on the evaluation form. (12 pts maximum)

- ___ Minimum 25% (or 10% where two or more States are involved, or 0% (up to \$200,000) for identified Insular Areas) (0 pts)
- ___ Each additional 5% (2 pts)

Total points for HCP partnerships (sum of 5-6): _____

DELIVERY OR COMPLETION

This section is to recognize proposals that will result in the initiation or completion of planning activities as well as plans that include discrete activities which can be completed within one year.

7) Proposals to initiate planning for a new HCP or to complete an HCP already under

development will score higher.

Proposals that involve ongoing projects may not claim initiation or finalization points if these points were claimed in proposals selected for funding in previous fiscal years. For example, if a funded project received points for initiating or finalizing the planning process in FY2015, a proposal for the same HCP cannot claim these points again in FY2016.

Score: Initiation or completion of the planning process. (4 pts maximum)

___ is instrumental in initiating a planning process (4 pt)

___ finalizes a planning process (4 pts)

Justification:

8) Activities which can be completed within one year, as opposed to the completion of the entire HCP over multiple years, will score higher. Each discrete activity included in the proposal must have an identified starting point and end point. Discrete activities include developing public outreach brochures, gathering baseline data for an HCP, or preparation of a draft HCP. **ALL** discrete activities identified in the proposal for which funding is sought must be completed in one year to receive points in this category. It is **NOT** sufficient for one or more discrete activities to be completed in one year with other identified discrete activities being completed in subsequent years, if funding for those additional activities is being sought through this proposal.

For proposals involving ongoing projects, a State may not claim these points if a previously funded phase of the project claimed the points and failed to complete **ALL** of the activities associated with that grant within the one year period. For example, if a proposal received these points in FY 2013 and failed to complete the associated tasks by December 2014, a State cannot claim these four points for the same planning effort in FY 2016. (4 pts maximum)

___ The activity(ies) for which funding is requested cannot be completed within 1 year (0 pts)

___ The activity(ies) for which funding is requested can be completed within 1 year (4 pts)

One year, for the purposes of this grant program, is defined as the close of the calendar year subsequent to the calendar year in which funding was appropriated. For example, for funding appropriated in fiscal year 2016, ALL discrete activities for which funding is sought must be completed by December 31, 2017, in order to receive the additional points in this category.

Justification:

Total points for Delivery (sum of 7-8): _____

TOTAL POINTS FOR THIS PROPOSAL (sum of 1-8 above): _____

**HCP LAND ACQUISITION PROGRAM
FISCAL YEAR 2016 EVALUATION FORM**

FWS Regional Staff: Please fill out this form completely. You may attach additional written explanations for the categories in this form if the space provided is inadequate.

Single Species HCP Land Acquisition project

Project Title _____

Region _____

State(s) _____

HCP name (As entered in ECOS) _____

Permit number _____

Service contact for more information _____

Acreage of land acquisition (break down acreage by parcel if more than one parcel is proposed for acquisition) _____

Estimated total cost of land acquisition (including management) _____

Percent of cost to be borne by non-Federal entities (list by entity and % of cost) _____

Amount of funding requested (total cost minus the non-Federal match) (break down by parcel if more than one is proposed for acquisition) _____

Regional priority points for this proposal* _____ (0 – 25 points)

* Each Region will have 25 points to distribute to the eligible Habitat Conservation Plan Land Acquisition grant proposals. That is, 25 points for all eligible proposals, not for each eligible proposal. The 25 points may be applied to grant proposal scores in any amount deemed appropriate by the Regional Director to reflect the Service and State priorities for funding. Please consider project readiness and conservation in the context of climate change when applying these discretionary points.

Justification for Regional priority _____

Total points available = 100 points + _____ Regional priority pts (maximum 125 points)

SPECIES BENEFITS

The purpose of this section is to evaluate how beneficial the land acquisition will be for listed and unlisted species covered by the HCP. Federally listed species are defined as those species listed as threatened or endangered by the Federal Government through Section 4 of the Endangered Species Act. Unlisted species include candidate, proposed, State listed and all other species. A **covered species** is any species (listed or unlisted) that is identified on the section 10(a)(1)(B) permit.

Listed Species

1) Acquisitions that benefit more covered listed species will score higher. Only those federally listed threatened or endangered species that are covered in the HCP and will benefit from the proposed land acquisition should be counted. Listed species that are expected to benefit from the land acquisition but not covered by the permit should not be counted.

Score: Number of federally listed species **covered by the HCP (listed on the permit)** that will benefit from the specific land acquisition identified in this proposal. Species benefit must be tied to the specific parcels, or grouping of parcels, proposed for acquisition. Please note, species listed here must also be considered in ranking factor two along with the degree of expected benefit to the species. (15 points maximum)

- _____ 1 species (1 pt)
- _____ 2-5 species (5 pts)
- _____ 6-10 species (10 pts)
- _____ 11+ species (15 pts)

Justification (identify species):

2) Acquisitions that provide greater benefit to covered listed species will score higher. HCP land acquisition projects with a focus on climate change adaptation should be addressed here to identify the conservation benefits to be derived by avoiding or offsetting climate change impacts, thereby reducing or eliminating threats to listed species covered by the HCP.

The benefit to covered listed species will be considered **major** if, if through the acquisition:

- 75% or greater of the species' range-wide habitat or an essential piece of habitat will be protected; or
- a major population necessary for recovery may be protected; or
- a source population that provides individuals for future emigration is protected; or
- major threats to the species will be eliminated

The benefit to covered listed species will be considered **minor** if, through the acquisition:

- 20% or less of the species' range-wide habitat will be protected, individual populations(s) contribute little to the overall recovery of the species, and/or threats to the covered species are not imminent.

To facilitate in the review process, you may consider including a table identifying EACH of the covered listed species expected to benefit from the acquisition, the expected magnitude of the benefit (major or minor), and a justification for the degree of benefit designated. An example is provided below.

For proposals including multiple species, the majority (more than 50%) of the benefits to species must be shown and justified as major in order to score the full 15 points under this ranking criterion. For example, a proposal covering five listed species must include justifications showing major benefits (as defined above) to at least three of the five species in order to score the full 15 points.

Score: Magnitude of benefits for listed species **covered by the HCP (listed on the permit)** that will result from the land acquisition. (15 points maximum)

- _____ Mostly minor benefits will result for the listed species (1 pt)
- _____ A combination of major and minor benefits will result for the listed species (10 pts)
- _____ Mostly major benefits will result for more than half of the listed species (15 pts)

Covered Listed Species	Expected Benefit	Degree of Benefit (major or minor)	Justification
Longhorn fairy shrimp	Protection of essential habitat	Major	80% of the species habitat will be protected through the acquisition of these X acres

Justification:

Unlisted Species

3) Only acquisitions that benefit more covered unlisted species will score higher. Unlisted species include species proposed for Federal listing, candidates for Federal listing, State listed species, and other species not federally listed as threatened or endangered. Unlisted species that are expected to benefit from the land acquisition but are not covered by the permit should not be counted.

Score: Number of unlisted (including State-listed species), proposed and candidate species for Federal listing **covered by the HCP (listed on the permit)** that will benefit from the land acquisition. Species benefit must be tied to the specific parcels, or grouping of parcels, proposed for acquisition. Please note, species listed here must also be considered in ranking factor 4 along with the degree of expected benefit to the species. (10 points maximum)

- _____ 0 species (0 pts) - **Skip to Question 5**
- _____ 1-5 species (3 pts)
- _____ 6-10 species (6 pts)
- _____ 11+ species (10 pts)

Justification (identify species):

4) Acquisitions that provide greater benefit to unlisted covered species will score higher. HCP land acquisition projects with a focus on climate change adaptation should be addressed here to identify the conservation benefits to be derived by avoiding or offsetting climate change impacts, thereby reducing or eliminating threats to unlisted species covered by the HCP.

The benefit to covered unlisted species will be considered **major** if, if through the acquisition:

- 75% or greater of the species' range-wide habitat or an essential piece of habitat will be protected; or
- a major population necessary for recovery may be protected; or
- a source population that provides surplus individuals for future emigration is protected; or
- major threats to the species will be eliminated

The benefit to covered unlisted species will be considered **minor** if, through the acquisition:

- 20% or less of the species' range-wide habitat will be protected, individual populations(s) contribute little to the overall recovery of the species, and/or threats to the covered species are not imminent.

To facilitate in the review process, you may consider including a table identifying EACH of the covered unlisted species expected to benefit from the acquisition, the expected magnitude of the benefit (major or minor), and justification for the degree of benefit designated. An example is provided below.

For proposals including multiple species, the majority (more than 50%) of the benefits to species must be shown and justified as major in order to score the full 15 points under this ranking criterion. For example, a proposal covering five unlisted species must include justifications showing major benefits (as defined above) to at least three of the five species in order to score the full 15 points.

Score: Magnitude of species benefits for unlisted species **covered by the HCP (listed on the permit)**. (10 points maximum)

- _____ Mostly minor benefits will result for the unlisted species (1 pt)
- _____ A combination of major and minor benefits will result for unlisted species (6 pts)
- _____ Mostly major benefits will result for more than half of the unlisted species (10 pts)

Covered Listed Species	Expected Benefit	Degree of Benefit (major or minor)	Justification
Mid-valley fairy shrimp	Protection of essential habitat	Major	80% of the species habitat will be protected through the acquisition of these X acres

Justification:

Total points for species benefits (sum of 1-4): _____

ECOSYSTEM BENEFITS

The purpose of this section is to evaluate how beneficial the land acquisition will be for the covered listed and unlisted species.

5) Lands that require little or no management to provide benefits for covered species will score higher in this evaluation factor. This habitat can include occupied or suitable unoccupied habitat. The level of management expected to be necessary is based on an evaluation of the biotic and abiotic components and ecological processes. Biotic factors include the structure and composition of plant and animal communities. Abiotic factors include soil, hydrology, natural topography, and salinity gradients. Ecological processes include succession, trophic energy flows, and disturbance regimes.

Score: When considered in the context of the surrounding landscape, the land targeted for acquisition contains _____ of the naturally occurring biotic and abiotic components and ecological processes necessary to maintain a fully functioning ecosystem that contains the habitat necessary to support the covered species associated with that ecosystem. (15 points maximum)

More points will be awarded for acquisition areas containing fully-functioning ecosystems that will require little or no restoration/management to benefit the covered species.

- _____ None: few ecological processes intact and/or substantial restoration needed (0 pts)
- _____ Some/Most: most core ecological processes intact (8 pts)
- _____ All: pristine ecological processes intact (15 pts)

Justification:

6) Land acquisitions that fill in critical components for land protection will score higher (e.g., lands that link two preserves together to reduce habitat fragmentation). HCP land acquisition projects with a focus on climate change adaptation should be addressed here to identify the conservation benefits to be derived through acquisition of the property in support of **covered (listed on the permit)** listed and unlisted species.

Score: Do the **lands proposed for acquisition** fill a critical void in the matrix of protected lands, such as a connection between protected areas or protection of a core population area? A justification **must** be included for each species for which the applicant is seeking points (15 points maximum)

- _____ To some degree for at least one listed species **covered by the HCP (listed on the permit)** (5 pts)
- _____ To a great degree for one listed species and some degree for one or more listed or unlisted species **covered by the HCP (listed on the permit)** (10 pts)
- _____ To a great degree for more than two species **covered by the HCP (listed on the permit)** (15 pts)

Justification:

Total points for ecosystem benefits (sum of 5-6): _____

FOSTERING HCP PARTNERSHIPS

The purpose of this section is to emphasize the importance of partners in significantly contributing to implementation of the HCP. This section includes consideration of the number of partners and amount of cost share contributions.

7) Proposals with a larger number of significant partners involved in the HCP will score higher. A significant partner is a public or private entity that is a significant player in the implementation of the HCP. For example, they are signatories to an implementing agreement, are signatories to some other agreement regarding participation in implementation, or received their own section 10(a)(1)(B) incidental take permit. Subpermittees or entities receiving certificates of inclusion are not significant partners to an HCP; however, they typically make a contribution toward implementation in return for receiving the benefits of incidental take authorization. If an entity that is receiving incidental take authorization is also contributing toward the proposed land acquisition, an additional point is accrued. The Service and the State agency applying for the grant should not be counted.

Please identify **each** partner as well as the **specific contribution** to be made by each partner. To facilitate in the review process, you may consider using chart similar to the example provided below. Please note: points not will be awarded for partners listed without identifying their specific contributions to the project.

Score: Number of significant partners involved in the implementation of the HCP. (8 points maximum)

_____ 1-5 significant partners (1 point)

_____ 1-5 significant partners with contributions toward implementation of the HCP from non-significant partners (subpermittees or entities receiving certificates of inclusion and making a monetary contribution toward HCP implementation) (5 points)

_____ Greater than 5 significant partners (8 points)

Stakeholder/Partner Name	Role	Contribution (cash or in-kind)
County X	Signatory to the I.A.	\$40,000 of Staff time and development of the HCP

List each significant partner and describe in detail the significant partner’s role in implementing the HCP:

8) Commitment to a successful HCP Land Acquisition project can be evidenced by cost share contributions. Cost share is the percent of the total project cost that will be provided by non-Federal partners. Proposals that include a greater than minimum cost share contribution will be ranked higher.

Score: Percentage of cost share provided by non-Federal partners. Rounding of the dollar amounts and/or percentages is not acceptable to meet the minimum cost share requirement or to receive additional points on the evaluation form. (12 points maximum)

____ Minimum 25% (or 10% where two or more States are involved, or 0% (up to \$200,000) for identified Insular Areas) (0 pts)

____ Each additional 5% (2 pts)

Total points for HCP partnerships (sum of 7-8): _____

TOTAL POINTS FOR THIS PROPOSAL (sum of 1-8 above): _____

**RECOVERY LAND ACQUISITION PROGRAM
FISCAL YEAR 2016 EVALUATION FORM**

FWS Regional Staff: Please fill out this form completely. You may attach additional written explanations for the categories in this form if the space provided is inadequate.

Project Title _____

Region _____

State(s) _____

Service contact for more information _____

Acreage of land acquisition (break down acreage by parcel if more than one parcel is proposed for acquisition) _____

Estimated total cost of the proposed project (i.e., Federal and non-Federal portions) _____

Percent of cost to be borne by non-Federal entities (list by entity and % of cost) _____

Amount of funding requested (total cost minus the non-Federal match) (break down by parcel if more than one is proposed for acquisition) _____

Regional priority points for this proposal* _____ (0 – 25 points)

* Each Region will have 25 points to distribute to the eligible Recovery Land Acquisition grant proposals. That is, 25 points for all eligible proposals, not for each eligible proposal. The 25 points may be applied to grant proposal scores in any amount deemed appropriate by the Regional Director to reflect the Service and State priorities for funding. Please consider project readiness and conservation in the context of climate change when applying these discretionary points.

Justification for Regional priority _____

Total points available = 100 points + _____ Regional priority pts (maximum 125 points)

SPECIES BENEFITS

The purpose of this section is to evaluate how beneficial the land acquisition will be for listed and candidate species. Federally listed species are defined as those species listed as threatened or endangered by the Federal Government through section 4 of the Endangered Species Act. Unlisted species include candidate, proposed, State listed and all other species.

1) Listed species benefits. The extent to which the habitat acquisition contributes to recovery. This factor should be scored based on benefits to the individual species as opposed to the aggregate. Consideration should be given to the magnitude of the benefit in terms of the proportion of the species range/area encompassed by the acquisition, the contribution to stated recovery goals, and whether the acquisition will allow for delisting or downlisting of a listed species. To score 20 points, the applicant must document that the proposal will potentially result in a high benefit to recovery of at least one listed species. A justification must be provided for each species covered by the proposal. (20 pts maximum)

___ Low benefit to recovery (acquisition will provide habitat that is currently unoccupied) (5 pts)

___ Medium benefit to recovery (acquisition is necessary to avoid a significant decline of the taxon {due to loss of habitat, increased threats, etc.}) (10 pts)

___ High benefit to recovery (acquisition is necessary to avoid extinction within the next five years, or the acquisition will assist the taxon achieve its recovery criteria within the next five years) (20 pts)

Justification:

2) Listed species recovery priority number. For those listed species that will benefit from the proposed acquisition that do not currently have an assigned priority number, you may calculate the appropriate number using the guidance provided in the *Federal Register* on September 21, 1983 (Pgs.,43098 - 43105, Vol. 48. No. 184 and Correction in FR notice of Nov. 15, 1983 Pg., 51985, Vol. 48. No. 221) (22 pts maximum)

___ 1 to 3 (10 pts)

___ 4 to 8 (5 pts)

___ 9 to 13 (2 pts)

___ 14 to 18 (1 pt)

Identify species and priority number assigned:

3) Number of species benefitted (listed and candidate only; at least one listed species must benefit). Draft recovery plans may only be considered if a Notice of Availability for the draft plan has been published in the *Federal Register*. (20 pts maximum)

___ Species with final recovery plans (8 pts for each species with a final plan)

___ Species with draft recovery plans (4 pts for each species with a draft plan)

___ Listed (without draft or final recovery plan) or candidate species (2 pts for each species)

Total points for species benefits (sum of 1-3): _____

ECOSYSTEM BENEFITS

The purpose of this section is to evaluate how beneficial the proposed land acquisition will be for the listed, unlisted (including State-listed species), proposed and candidate species. Recovery land acquisition projects with a focus on climate change adaptation should be addressed here to identify the conservation benefits to be derived through acquisition of the property in support of listed, unlisted (including State-listed species), proposed and candidate species.

4) Ecosystem benefits (20 pts maximum)

Function

___ Habitat fills a critical role in the life cycle of the primary species for which the land is acquired (8 pts)

___ Habitat requires little or no management to provide benefits to the primary species (4 pts)

Connectivity

___ Habitat links two existing protected areas together or is adjacent to existing protected areas, to reduce habitat fragmentation (8 pts)

Total points for ecosystem benefits (sum of 4): _____

COST SHARE CONTRIBUTIONS

5) Amount of cost share. A minimum of twenty-five percent in non-Federal cost share is required. If two or more States or Territories are contributors, the non-Federal cost share decreases to 10 percent. To be eligible for this reduction, each State must actively participate and each State's contribution must be described, e.g., an action in a recovery plan for a species of multi-State concern, in which two or more States or Territories are actively participating in recovery actions. Rounding of the dollar amounts and/or percentages is not acceptable to meet the minimum cost share requirement or to receive additional points on the evaluation form. (18 pts maximum)

___ Minimum 25% (or 10% where two or more States are involved, or 0% (up to \$200,000) for identified Insular Areas) (0 pts)

___ Each additional 5% (2 pts)

Total points for cost share contributions (sum of 5): _____

TOTAL POINTS FOR THIS PROPOSAL (sum of 1-5 above): _____

Review and Selection Process:

Proposals submitted for consideration in the “Traditional” Conservation Grants program will be reviewed by representatives from our Regional Offices (see VIII. Agency Contacts) and award selections will be made by the Regional Directors.

Recovery Land Acquisition proposals will compete at a regional level for funding. Within each Region, Service representatives will assess the applications and make funding recommendations to the Service’s Regional Director. The Regional Director will use the recommendations in selecting projects, although geographic distribution of projects, the amount of funding requested for a project compared with the total amount of funding available, project readiness, and other such factors may also be considered. The Regional Director will then forward Regional recommendations to the Service’s Director. Partial funding of one or more projects, when practicable, may be considered. After reviewing the Regional Directors’ recommendations and the other factors, the Director will make funding selections.

Habitat Conservation Planning Assistance and HCP Land Acquisition proposals will compete at a national level for funding. A panel of Service representatives will assess the applications submitted from the Regional Offices at the national level and make funding recommendations to the Service’s Director. The Director will use the panel member recommendations in selecting projects, although geographic distribution of projects, the amount of funding requested for a project compared with the total amount of funding available, unique single-species projects, project readiness, and other such factors may also be considered. Partial funding of one or more projects, when practicable, may be considered. After reviewing the panel members’ recommendations and the other factors, the Service’s Director will make funding selections.

In fiscal year 2016, 10 percent of the total amount of HCP Land Acquisition funding will be targeted to support proposals for single-species HCPs. The Service will also implement a \$2 million cap on HCP Land Acquisition proposals and a \$1 million cap on HCP Planning Assistance proposals. Service Regional Directors will be provided with 25 points total in each of the Nontraditional programs to distribute among project proposals to reflect the collective priorities of the States and the Service. We ask Regional Directors to consider project readiness and conservation in the context of climate change when applying these discretionary points.

Prior to participating in any review or evaluation process, all staff and peer reviewers, evaluators, panel members, and advisors must sign and return to the program office point of contact the “Department of the Interior Conflict of Interest Certification” form. For a copy of this form, contact the Service point of contact identified in the Agency Contacts section below.

Each fiscal year, for every entity receiving one or more awards in that fiscal year, the Service conducts a risk assessment based on eight risk categories. The result of this risk assessment is used to establish a monitoring plan for all awards to the entity in that fiscal year. The Service’s risk assessment form is available on the Internet at <http://www.fws.gov/forms/3-2462.pdf>.

VII. Award Administration

Award Notices: Following review, applicants may be requested to revise the project scope and/or budget before an award is made. Successful applicants will receive written notice in the form of a notice of award document. Notices of award are typically sent to recipients by e-mail. If e-mail notification is unsuccessful, the documents will be sent by courier mail (e.g., FedEx, DHL or UPS). Award recipients are not required to sign/return the Notice of Award document. Acceptance of an award is defined as starting work, drawing down funds, or accepting the award via electronic means. Awards are based on the application submitted to, and as approved by, the Service. The notice of award document will include instructions specific to each recipient on how to request payment. If applicable, the instructions will detail any additional information/forms required and where to submit payment requests. Applicants whose projects are not selected for funding will receive written notice, most often by e-mail, within 30 days of the final review decision.

Domestic Recipient Payments: Prior to award, the Service program office will contact you/your organization to either enroll in the U.S. Treasury's Automated Standard Application for Payments (ASAP) system or, if eligible, obtain approval from the Department of the Interior to be waived from using ASAP.

Domestic applicants subject to the SAM registration requirement (see Section III B.) who receive a waiver from receiving funds through ASAP must maintain current banking information in SAM. Domestic applicants exempt from the SAM registration requirement who receive a waiver from receiving funds through ASAP will be required to submit their banking information directly to the Service program. However, ***do NOT submit any banking information to the Service until it is requested from you by the Service program!***

Transmittal of Sensitive Data: Recipients are responsible for ensuring any sensitive data being sent to the Service is protected during its transmission/delivery. The Service strongly recommends that recipients use the most secure transmission/delivery method available. The Service recommends the following digital transmission methods: secure digital faxing; encrypted emails; emailing a password protected zipped/compressed file attachment in one email followed by the password in a second email; or emailing a zipped/compressed file attachment. The Service strongly encourages recipients sending sensitive data in paper copy to use a courier mail service. Recipients may also contact their Service Project Officer and provide any sensitive data over the telephone.

Award Terms and Conditions: Acceptance of a financial assistance award (i.e., grant or cooperative agreement) from the Service carries with it the responsibility to be aware of and comply with the terms and conditions applicable to the award. Acceptance is defined as the start of work, drawing down funds, or accepting the award via electronic means. Awards are based on the application submitted to and approved by the Service and are subject to the terms and conditions incorporated into the notice of award either by direct citation or by reference to the following: Federal regulations; program legislation or regulation; and special award terms and conditions. The Federal regulations applicable to Service awards are available on the Internet at <http://www.fws.gov/grants/>. If you do not have access to the Internet and require a full text copy

of the award terms and conditions, contact the Service point of contact identified in the Agency Contacts section below.

Special Award Terms and Conditions:

A grant award document will specify the project requirements, such as the cost share, the project design, the time commitment for maintaining the project's benefits, and the reporting requirements, and provide for Service access to the project area in order to check on its progress. An applicant should not initiate a project in expectation of CESCf funding, nor should they purchase materials or begin work until such time as they receive the final grant award document signed by an authorized Service official.

Obligation of Funds: The Service's goal is to obligate CESCf funds to States within 120 days of the award announcement. States will assist the Service in meeting the 120 day target by providing the documents necessary for grant issuance as soon as possible following the grant award announcements.

Expenditure of Funds: Service policy is to allow for up to three years from the date of obligation for the expenditure of CESCf funds. Any extension will require the approval from the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Please be aware that when the Service funds fire management on lands other than the National Wildlife Refuge System lands, the activity must be conducted according to Chapter 18 of the Service Fire Management Handbook Regarding Prescribed Burning Off-Service Lands at <http://www.fws.gov/endangered/esa-library/pdf/fireplanreview.pdf> and further clarified at <http://www.fws.gov/endangered/esa-library/pdf/m0299.pdf>.

Recipient Reporting Requirements:

Financial and Performance Reports: Interim financial reports and performance reports may be required. Interim reports will be required no more frequently than quarterly, and no less frequently than annually. A final financial report and a final performance report will be required and are due within 90 calendar days of the end date of the award. Performance reports must contain: 1) a comparison of actual accomplishments with the goals and objectives of the award as detailed in the approved scope of work; 2) a description of reasons why established goals were not met, if appropriate; and 3) any other pertinent information relevant to the project results.

Significant Developments Reports: Events may occur between the scheduled performance reporting dates that have significant impact upon the supported activity. In such cases, recipients are required to notify the Service in writing as soon as the following types of conditions become known:

- Problems, delays, or adverse conditions that will materially impair the ability to meet the objective of the Federal award. This disclosure must include a statement of any corrective action(s) taken or contemplated, and any assistance needed to resolve the situation.

- Favorable developments that enable meeting time schedules and objectives sooner or at less cost than anticipated or producing more or different beneficial results than originally planned.

The Service will specify in the notice of award document the reporting and reporting frequency applicable to the award.

Conflict of Interest Disclosures: Recipients are responsible for notifying the Service Project Officer in writing of any actual or potential conflicts of interest that may arise during the life of this award. Conflicts of interest include any relationship or matter which might place the recipient, the recipient's employees, or the recipient's subrecipients in a position of conflict, real or apparent, between their responsibilities under this award and any other outside interests. Conflicts of interest may also include, but are not limited to, direct or indirect financial interests, close personal relationships, positions of trust in outside organizations, consideration of future employment arrangements with a different organization, or decision-making affecting the award that would cause a reasonable person with knowledge of the relevant facts to question the impartiality of the Recipient, the Recipient's employees, or the Recipient's subrecipients in the matter. Upon receipt of such a notice, the Service Project Officer in consultation with their Ethics Counselor will determine if a conflict of interest exists and, if so, if there are any possible actions to be taken by the Recipient, the Recipient's employee(s), or the Recipient's Subrecipient(s) that could reduce or resolve the conflict. Failure to resolve conflicts of interest in a manner that satisfies the Service may result in any of the remedies described in 2 CFR 200.338, Remedies for Noncompliance, including termination of this award.

Other Mandatory Disclosures: Recipients and their subrecipients must disclose, in a timely manner and in writing, to the Service or pass-through entity all violations of Federal criminal law involving fraud, bribery, or gratuity violations potentially affecting this award. Failure to make required disclosures can result in any of the remedies described in 2 CFR 200.338, Remedies for noncompliance, including suspension or debarment (See 2 CFR 200.113, 2 CFR Part 180, and 31 U.S.C. 3321).

VIII. Agency Contacts

Please refer to the table below for a list of Regional Program Coordinators. Information on the CESCO is also available from the Branch of Recovery and State Grants, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 5275 Leesburg Pike, MS:ES Falls Church, VA 22041-3803, or electronically at <http://www.fws.gov/endangered/grants/index.html>

Table 2. List of Regional Program Coordinators and Where To Send Project Proposals			
Service Region	States or Territory where the project will occur	Where to send your CESCf project proposal	Regional CESCf Contact and Phone Number
Region 1	Hawaii, Idaho, Oregon, Washington, Guam, and Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands	Regional Director U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Eastside Federal Complex 911 N.E. 11th Avenue Portland, OR 97232-4181	David Leonard & Colleen Henson (503/231-2372) (503/231-6283)
Region 2	Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas	Regional Director U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 500 Gold Avenue SW., Room 4012 Albuquerque, NM 87102	Stacey Stanford (505/248-6665)
Region 3	Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin	Regional Director U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Ecological Services 5600 American Blvd. West Suite 990 Bloomington, Minnesota 55437-1458	Thomas Magnuson (612/713-5467)
Region 4	Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands	Regional Director U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1875 Century Boulevard, Suite 200 Atlanta, GA 30345	Kelly Bibb (RLA) (404/679-7132) & David Dell (HCP) (404/679-7313)
Region 5	Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, and West Virginia	Regional Director U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 300 Westgate Center Drive Hadley, MA 01035-9589	Sadie Stevens (413/253-8677)

Region 6	Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming	Regional Director U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 134 Union Blvd., Suite 645 Lakewood, CO 80228	Amelia Orton-Palmer (303/236-4211)
Region 7	Alaska	Regional Director U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1011 East Tudor Road, Anchorage, AK 99503-6199	Drew Crane (907/ 786-3323)
Region 8	California and Nevada	Regional Director U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Federal Building, 2800 Cottage Way, Room W-2606 Sacramento, CA 95825-1846	Dan Cox (HCP) (916/ 414-6539) Karen Jensen (RLA) (916/ 414-6557)

IX. Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: The Paperwork Reduction Act requires us to tell you why we are collecting this information, how we will use it, and whether or not you have to respond. A response to this Notice of Funding Opportunity is required to receive funding. A Federal agency may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. OMB has approved this collection and assigned OMB Control No. 1018-0109 which expires on November 20, 2015. The public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average of 37 hours per application and 8 hours per performance report. These burden estimates include time for reviewing instructions and gathering data, but do not include the time needed to complete government-wide Standard Forms associated with the application and financial reporting. You may send comments regarding the burden estimate or any other aspect of this information collection to the Information Collection Clearance Officer, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Policy and Directives Management, 5275 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, VA 22041.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

General Questions (applicable to all grant programs)

- 1. Q: Can grant funds be used to assist an entity with Federal mitigation requirements contained in an HCP or the section 10 permit conditions?**

A: No. A proposal cannot include actions required to satisfy a permittee's Federal mitigation requirements. A proposal can include actions that complement mitigation actions. Proposals that include fees collected or used or lands acquired to satisfy the obligations of a State's conservation obligation can be submitted (e.g., fees collected or used or lands acquired that exceed the Federal permit requirements and are collected, used, or acquired to meet a State's conservation obligation of a joint HCP/NCCP). However, grant funds can assist in conservation obligations pursuant to State law or local ordinance that are above and beyond the Federal mitigation requirements for that HCP.

- 2. Q: Can grant funds be used to help an entity come into compliance with a biological opinion?**

A: No. Federal action agencies and their permittees are responsible for meeting the terms and conditions in biological opinions.

- 3. Q: Can grant funds be used to assist an entity in complying with other Federal regulations?**

A: No. We do not intend to grant funding for projects that serve to satisfy regulatory requirements at the Federal level (e.g., mitigation for Clean Water Act permits).

- 4. Q: What is the definition of a "Candidate Species" for the purposes of the CESCO grant programs?**

A: Candidate Species as defined at 50 CFR 424.02(b) means "any species being considered by the Secretary for listing as an endangered or a threatened species, but not yet the subject of a proposed rule." Therefore, any species identified by the State or Territorial agency that has entered into a cooperative agreement with the Service may be considered a candidate for the purposes of the CESCO grant programs provided that upon selecting a project for an award, or in forwarding that project for consideration for an award, the Regional Director will affirm that the species is being considered for listing, and upon conclusion of the grant project, make a determination of whether the species should or should not continue to be considered for listing as an endangered or threatened species.

- 5. Q: Can Section 6 grant monies be applied to projects that have obtained funds through another Federal nexus, such as the Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration and the**

Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration programs?

A: Yes. These grants may be used to fund distinct aspects of complex or ongoing projects that have obtained grant funds from other Federal sources. Full disclosure of the project including, but not limited to, the specific projects and respective funding from each Federal program must be fully described in the proposal. However, accomplishments anticipated under the Section 6 grant should stand on their own and not rely on monies obtained from other Federal sources. If it is an ongoing project, previous phases must already be successfully completed. Use of Section 6 funds for these purposes must adhere to all Federal regulations governing such use.

6. Q: Can projects that have multiple sources of Federal funding use these other sources of funding as part of the non-Federal match?

A: No. Any and all sources of Federal funding are considered Federal, and therefore cannot be included as part of the non-Federal match.

7. Q: Can National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) funds be used as part of the non-Federal cost share?

A: Yes and No. NFWF funds cannot be used as part of the non-Federal cost share unless it can be demonstrated that the origin of such funds is non-Federal. NFWF receives funding from a variety of sources, including Federal sources. Therefore, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that NFWF funds are non-Federal in nature, and not commingled with Federal funds, use of NFWF funds will not be accepted as part of the non-Federal cost share.

8. Q: How is the cost share by non-Federal partners determined?

A: The non-Federal cost share is determined as a percent of total project costs. The cost share can include cash, allowable costs incurred, and third party in-kind contributions. The cost share must be expended within the grant period. A proposal must include at least 25 percent non-Federal cost share per Section 6 of the Endangered Species Act, if one State is involved. If two or more States or Territories are contributors to the project, the non-Federal cost share decreases to 10 percent. To determine the cost share necessary, first determine the total cost of the project then multiply the total cost by .25 or .10, this is the amount necessary for the cost share. For example, if the estimated project cost is \$1,000, then \$250 ($1000 * .25$) must be provided by our non-Federal partners, and the Federal share would be \$750. If two or more States are contributors, the non-Federal cost share drops to \$100 ($1000 * .10$), and the Federal share would be \$900. Proposals that have a non-Federal cost share greater than the required minimum will receive additional points in the ranking.

9. Q: What evidence must be provided by the States to qualify for a higher Federal participation rate? OR What evidence must be provided by the States to qualify for 90:10 cost share ratio?

A: As described in the Fish and Wildlife Service manual (521 FW 4.9)

States may increase the rate of Federal participation from 75 percent to 90 percent of total grant costs when two or more States cooperate to conserve an endangered or threatened species of common interest [50 CFR 81.8(a)].

Section 6 (d)(2)(ii), ESA, defines cooperation as "whenever 2 or more States having a common interest in one or more endangered or threatened species, . . . enter jointly into agreement with the Secretary." A cooperative action is one where two or more States work on a mutual problem. This may be an action outlined in a recovery plan for a species of multi-State concern, an action outlined in a memorandum of agreement between cooperating States, an action described in cooperative grants, or an action outlined in a recovery implementation program. The cooperating States may designate a lead State to coordinate with the Regional Director [43 CFR 12.50(b)(3), 50 CFR 81.6, 50 CFR 81.8(a), 50 CFR 81.9]. To seek an increased rate of participation for a cooperative project within a grant, cooperating States **MUST** (emphasis added) provide the following documentation to the Regional Director with the Grant Proposal: Documentation of the cooperative action entered into by the cooperating States, which may be in any form (e.g., memorandum, letter of agreement, recovery plan, implementation program) that meets the needs of the cooperating States, provided it contains the responsibilities and work to be carried out by **EACH** (emphasis added) of the cooperating States. Examples follow:

(1) Either (a) one State submits an Application for Federal Assistance (SF 424) and a letter of agreement from another State sharing cooperative efforts, or (b) each State identifies the joint recovery action from the recovery plan in existing Applications for Federal Assistance (SF 424).

(2) Each cooperating State submits a proposal for the joint project and separate Applications for Federal Assistance (SF 424).

(3) When one or more States are participating in a recovery implementation program, one or more may submit separate Application(s) for Federal Assistance (SF 424) and certification that they are participating in the recovery implementation program, such as "The Colorado River Recovery Implementation Program."

Each cooperating State is responsible for submitting performance and financial reports related to the joint project, when they are actively participating in Federal reimbursement funding. Incomplete work by any one of the cooperating States may result in a recovery of Federal funds from all States, if it is determined that the joint cooperative objective will not be accomplished [43 CFR 12.80].

We have limited funds available for these programs, and each project we fund at the increased Federal cost share rate reduces our ability to support other projects, in other States and Territories; we believe it is most appropriate for States to follow example one or two above to demonstrate a level of support for each project we fund at the higher rate. This will not change the underlying requirements that qualify a proposal for this higher Federal cost share, and we expect that projects that have qualified for this cost share level in the past will be able to provide this information, and so will continue to qualify for the higher rate in the future.

10. Q: For Insular Areas (including the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Government of the Northern Mariana Islands) that are exempt from grant matching requirements up to \$200,000 under all U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Grant Programs (based on a May 9, 2003, Director's Memorandum), how will the ranking factors for additional cost sharing be addressed?

A: With regard to the ranking factors that provide additional points for additional cost sharing, proposals received from the Insular Areas listed above shall receive additional points for cost sharing in proportion to the additional points awarded to State proposals (i.e., 2 additional points for each additional 5% of cost share provided above the required minimum of 0% (up to \$200,000) up to the maximum number of points for this ranking factor).

11. Q: How many years can a project proposal be submitted for? OR What is the grant agreement period?

A: The Service has determined that the grant agreement period shall be for up to three (3) years (i.e., three years or less). Therefore, any work proposed in a project proposal must be completed within a three-year time frame. This time frame begins with a signed award document (i.e., obligation of funds) and ends with grant closeout. All work must be completed within this time. We highly recommend that project proposals are structured in such a way that annual costs and related accomplishments are clearly identifiable. In this way, partial funding may be awarded based on the reported annual expenditures and anticipated accomplishments stated in the proposal, should this prove necessary. Please keep in mind that submitting a project in one fiscal year does not preclude submitting the same or similar proposal in subsequent years for additional funding. A performance report is due annually within 90 days of the anniversary of the start date of the grant and a final report is due 90 days after the grant expiration.

12. Q: Can management costs be used as part of the State cost share for these grant projects?

A: Yes. Provided that funds sufficient to cover the management costs for a specified time period are secured at the time the land or easement is purchased **AND** provided that the proportion of Federal funding provided for management does not exceed the proportion of Federal funding provided for the land or easement purchase. In other words, the

amount of funding for management costs to be included as part of the grant may not exceed the purchase price for the land or easement.

For example, if a parcel of land to be purchased cost \$100,000 and a State or Territory were to meet the minimum eligibility criteria of a 75:25 - Federal / non-Federal match, then the maximum amount the Federal government would pay toward the purchase of the land would be \$75,000. If it is determined and documented that management of this property is going to cost an additional \$150,000, then the total project cost for the land acquisition and management would be \$250,000. Following the minimum eligibility criteria of 75:25 this would yield a split of \$187,500 Federal and \$62,500 non-Federal funding. However, because in this example the management costs exceeded the land purchase price, the Federal government would pay 75 percent of the land purchase price (\$75,000) and 75 percent of the management costs (\$112,500). This would be an unallowable scenario because the Federal portion of the grant provided for management (\$112,500) would exceed the Federal portion of the grant provided for land acquisition (\$75,000).

In order to use the management funding as part of the match, the State or Territory MUST document what activities would occur on the property and how much those activities would cost annually. Please note that management of lands acquired through these programs must be managed in perpetuity for the purposes in which the grant was awarded.

13. Q: Can activities such as habitat and species surveys be used as the State match for these grant projects?

A: Yes. Initial management costs including habitat and species surveys may be used as the State match provided that the costs are accrued and the work is completed within the grant agreement period (3 years). These initial management costs must be incurred for work carried out on the land acquired with the grant, or in the case of HCP planning grants, within the planning area associated with the grant. In addition, such work and the associated costs must be considered “allowable costs” per OMB guidelines, which can be obtained through our Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program Office in each U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Region (<http://wsfrprograms.fws.gov/Subpages/ContactUs/ContactUs.htm>).

14. Q: Will States and Territories be able to claim reimbursement for administrative costs (overhead), especially for those funds that will be forwarded to local or private conservation efforts, and how will appropriate overhead rates be determined?

A: Yes. These costs can be included as long as they are included in the proposal and follow the OMB guidelines for administrative costs, which can be obtained through our Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program Office in each U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Region (<http://wsfrprograms.fws.gov/Subpages/ContactUs/ContactUs.htm>). Please note that full-time equivalents (FTE) costs by States, Territories, counties, and

other entities must be tied to a specific project and should be included in these proposals sparingly. Likewise, third party administrative costs should be kept to a minimum and used sparingly.

15. Q: Given that listed plants are usually not protected on private lands, will plants be eligible for consideration?

A: Yes. We encourage the recovery of plants on private lands, especially for plants that are unique within their area or region, last known populations, or for other unique considerations. For HCPs, we do list plants on section 10(a) permits as covered species.

16. Q: Are Tribes eligible to receive funding directly through these grant programs?

A: No. By law, these grant programs apply only to State and Territorial agencies that have current Cooperative Agreements with the Service. However, States may submit proposals involving Tribes, i.e., Tribes may receive funding by working cooperatively with the State. Other funding opportunities for tribal wildlife conservation have been available since FY 2002. We encourage Tribes to contact the Native American Liaison in each U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Region to find out more about these opportunities. <http://www.fws.gov/nativeamerican/contact.html>

17. Q: Can a State submit a proposal for reimbursement of previously purchased land?

A: No. It is the Service's policy that grants be funded prospectively. Therefore, we will not accept proposals submitted for reimbursement of previously purchased land. Costs for the acquisition of lands or interests in lands incurred prior to approval of the grant award document by an authorized Service official are not allowable. The State is considered to have incurred the costs for land on the date the State becomes legally obligated for the purchase. Examples of when an acquisition cost is incurred are when a contract to purchase is executed or when an option is exercised. Prior approval by the Regional Director is evidenced by an approved Application for Federal Assistance (SF 424) and the obligation of Federal funds through an approved grant award document.

18. Q: Can National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) listed species be included in proposals?

A: Yes and No. Project proposals may be submitted for species with which the Service shares joint jurisdiction with NMFS when that proposal would benefit the jointly listed species while it is within the jurisdiction of the Service (e.g., a proposal for beach acquisition that would benefit a jointly listed sea turtle species would be acceptable). Proposals for those species solely under NMFS jurisdiction, or that benefit a shared jurisdiction species only while it is within the jurisdiction of NMFS, will not be

considered. This is not to say that a proposal should not point out additional benefits to NMFS listed species when discussing other merits of the proposal, only that these benefits will not contribute to any of the ranking factors.

19. Q: Must a State or Territory have a Data Universal Number System (DUNS) number to apply for these grants?

A: Yes. On June 27, 2003, OMB published a *Federal Register* notice (68 FR 38402) that announced final policy issuance on the use of a universal identifier by grant applicants. The policy requires applicants applying for Federal grants or cooperative agreements on or after October 1, 2003 to acquire a Data Universal Number System (DUNS) number.

It is the responsibility of the organization seeking Federal funds to obtain a DUNS number, as necessary. Grant and cooperative agreement applicants (excluding individuals) need to ensure they have a DUNS number. Organizations can receive a DUNS number at no cost by calling the dedicated toll-free DUNS Number request line at 1-866-705-5711.

20. Q: Can additional project information, not contained in the written project narrative, be submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for consideration after the closing date for submission of proposals?

A: No. Any and ALL information that the applicant would like to have considered MUST be included in the written proposal. Project applicants may have discussions with Service personnel to clarify information that is contained in the written proposal. However, any new or additional information will not be considered. The proposal must be a stand-alone document.

21. Q: Can the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and/or the State agency applying for the grant funding be considered a stakeholder or significant partner?

A: No. The Service and the State agency applying for grant funding are recognized as the key stakeholders or significant partners in the HCP planning or HCP land acquisition process. Therefore, neither the Service or any of the Service programs, nor the State or any of the subdivisions of the State agency should be included as stakeholders or significant partners. For the purpose of the HCP Planning Assistance and HCP Land Acquisition Grants, we are only considering those stakeholders or significant partners that are in addition to the Service and the State agency applying for grant funding.

Recovery Land Acquisition Grants

1. Q: Can the grant funds be used for planning acquisitions?

A: No. These funds are provided to States and Territories for the acquisition of habitat and are not intended for planning purposes. Also, these funds shall not be used to fund land acquisitions associated with permitted HCPs.

2. Q: Will perpetual conservation easements satisfy the criterion for a “commitment to funding for and implementation of management of the habitat in perpetuity”?

A: Yes, provided that the easement is established in perpetuity for the purposes of the grant and that the easement provides for the management of the habitat in perpetuity. There are additional requirements for the acquisition of conservation easements such as a draft easement, baseline condition report, and a management plan that must be approved (at least in draft) by the Service prior to drawing funds for the easement acquisition.

3. Q: Does land acquisition (the land to be acquired) have to be specifically mentioned in a recovery plan to qualify for this grant?

A: Yes and No. When a recovery plan for the species in question exists, the land acquisition must be consistent with the recovery plan. However, if a proposal is considered based on justification provided under one or more of the three exemptions stated in the eligibility criteria, then the land to be acquired does not have to be addressed in a recovery plan.

4. Q: Must a species be downlisted or delisted to obtain maximum points in ranking factor one?

A: No. While downlisting and delisting are desirable endpoints, maximum points will be awarded for acquisition(s) deemed necessary to avoid extinction within the next five years, or acquisition(s) that will assist the taxon achieve its recovery criteria within the next five years.

5. Q: Is the eligibility criterion that “habitat must be set aside in perpetuity for the purposes of recovery” appropriate, particularly if the species in question is either delisted due to recovery or goes extinct?

A: Yes. If the species is delisted due to recovery, then the habitat acquired as part of the recovery process should be maintained to ensure that habitat loss does not contribute to species decline in the future. The degree of habitat protection is a primary consideration in delisting determinations. Furthermore, land set aside for the recovery of one species often provides benefit to other listed species or species of concern. For that reason, setting aside the property in perpetuity may provide numerous benefits to species other than the “target” species. There are also instances where a species is presumed to be extinct, only to be “found” later in time. Therefore, setting the property aside in

perpetuity is prudent. However, should the “target” species become extinct and the habitat provide no significant benefit to other species, then the Service could revisit this on a case by case basis. Disposition instructions must be obtained from the Service in accordance with 43 CFR 12.71.

6. Q: Can a proposal for acquisition of a particular parcel of land be submitted for consideration in both the Recovery Land Acquisition Grant program and the HCP Land Acquisition Grant program?

A: No. A proposal may not be submitted for funding consideration in both the Recovery Land Acquisition Grant and the HCP Land Acquisition Grant programs in the same fiscal year.

Habitat Conservation Planning Assistance Grants

1. Q: Must an HCP be completed within a year to qualify for this grant?

A: No. As stated in the eligibility criteria, the proposal must involve discrete activities that can be accomplished within the grant agreement period and each activity must have an identified starting point and end point. Examples of discrete activities include developing public outreach brochures, gathering baseline data for an HCP, finalizing the HCP documents. Furthermore, the proposal should identify work elements that will be completed annually during the grant agreement period. Identifying elements that will be completed annually will facilitate our ability to provide partial funding to a proposal should that become necessary. However, an HCP does not need to be completed in its entirety within one year to qualify for this grant.

2. Q: Must ALL discrete activities identified in the proposal, for which funding is sought, be completed in one year to receive an additional point in the time to completion criteria?

A: YES **ALL** discrete activities identified in the proposal, for which funding is sought, must be completed in one year to receive points in this category. It is **NOT** sufficient for one or more discrete activities to be completed in one year with other identified discrete activities being completed in subsequent years, if funding for those additional activities is being sought through this proposal.

For proposals involving ongoing projects, a State may not claim these points if a previously funded phase of the project claimed the points and failed to complete **ALL** of the activities associated with that grant within the one year period. For example, if a proposal received these points in FY 2014 and failed to complete the associated tasks by December 2015, a State cannot claim these four points for the same planning effort in FY 2016.

3. Q: When does the one year time frame begin and end?

A: One Year, for the purposes of this grant program, is defined as the close of the calendar year subsequent to the calendar year in which funding was appropriated. For example, for funding appropriated in fiscal year 2016, ALL discrete activities for which funding is sought must be completed by December 31, 2017 in order to receive the additional point in ranking criteria number eight.

HCP Land Acquisition Grants

1. Q: Why is the HCP Land Acquisition Program targeted toward larger, multiple species HCPs?

A: The underlying spirit of the HCP program is to encourage state and local governments and private landowners to undertake regional and multiple species planning efforts. These large-scale, regional HCPs can significantly reduce the burden of the ESA on small landowners by providing efficient mechanisms for compliance, distributing the economic and logistical impacts of endangered species conservation among the community, and bringing a broad range of landowner activities under the HCPs' legal protections.

2. Q: Can a proposal for acquisition of a particular parcel of land be submitted for consideration in both the HCP Land Acquisition Grant program and the Recovery Land Acquisition Grant program?

A: No. A proposal may not be submitted for funding consideration in both the HCP Land Acquisition and the Recovery Land Acquisition Grant programs in the same fiscal year.

Policy set forth in the Fish and Wildlife Service Manual (521 FW 4) guides the administration of the CESCO grant programs (<http://www.fws.gov/policy/521fw4.html>).