

Interagency Special Status and Sensitive Species Program-Update

ISSSSP List Update News

The ISSSSP list update scheduled for this past winter was intentionally delayed to incorporate changes (species removals/additions and changes in ranks) that the Oregon Natural Heritage Information Center (ORNHIC) may make to their list of *Rare, Threatened and Endangered Species of Oregon*. The ORNHIC list update will include only an electronic posting of the changes and will not include a printed publication. They expect to have their list update completed in May 2009.

The ISSSSP will send out a draft Special Status Species (SSS) list for field review in late spring. The field units will then have a month for review of the draft SSS list. The review should focus on:

1. identifying Documented and Suspected occurrence information for new species added to the list, and
2. updates to Documented or Suspected occurrence information for species that have been on the list.

Comments will also be considered for species where there appears to be a conflict with the ORNHIC/WNHP rank for a particular species compared to the information you have for the

species.

When we receive comments back, the ISSSSP will resolve the documented and suspected occurrence issues with each National Forest or BLM District.

Also, the Washington Office of the BLM revised the BLM 6840 Manual (12/2008) that establishes policy for Special Status Species. One revision changes the national BLM criteria for determining Bureau Sensitive species. In order for the ISSSSP to be consistent with the revised BLM policy, we will compare the interagency criteria for determining inclusion as a Sensitive species against the new criteria in the BLM 6840 policy and analyze the changes this may have to our existing interagency criteria and resulting Sensitive species list.

When we have completed resolution of the Documented and Suspected occurrence status and application of the criteria modifications that may result, we will transmit another final draft for field review sometime this fall. A final list will be transmitted around the end of the calendar year or the very beginning of 2010.

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Key Points in this issue:

- ISSSSP List Update to occur this calendar year (Draft out this spring, final by December/January)
- Information gaps for priority species to be identified by field this summer during the draft list review
- Work groups ended for Bats and Foothill yellow-legged frog

Awards

Three different Forest Service Region 6 and BLM Oregon/Washington botanists have been recognized nationally for their efforts. Congratulations to each of the award recipients!

Wayne Rolle: the 2009 national Excellence in Rare Plant Management Award. Wayne has worked for the Rogue/Siskiyou National Forest for over 19 years. He was recognized for his leadership, expertise and many accomplishments in the conservation of rare vascular and non-vascular botanical species in one of the most botanically diverse regions of the nation.

Alice Smith: the 2009 Karl Urban Celebrating Wildflowers Award. Alice works as a botanist for the Sweet Home Ranger District on the Willamette National Forest. She was recognized for her knowledge, passion, thoughtful leadership and accomplishments in the areas of habitat restoration and public outreach.

Joan SeEVERS: the 2009 Linda Siebert Career Achievement Award. Joan is the BLM Oregon State Office botanist and has worked as a botanist for the BLM in Oregon since 1977. Joan was recognized for her solid leadership and consistent guidance in developing a strong and innovative botany program for the BLM.

Special Status and Sensitive Species Work Groups

Work groups are short term teams that identify high priority information and conservation gaps, to assist our management of the species in accordance with SSS policies. The ISSSSP then funds tasks to address those gaps. We've focused our work groups on species of high conservation or management concern, particularly those with much complexity or potential disagreements on approaches. Products created by the work groups are posted on the ISSSSP website.

There are currently 7 different work groups: Oregon spotted frog, Columbia spotted frog, Mardon skipper, Fungi Oregon slender salamander,

Bridgeporus nobilissimus, and White-headed and Lewis' woodpeckers.

Recently 2 work groups have ended; the foothill yellow-legged frog, due to the success of task accomplishments, and Bats, due to the complexity of issues and difficulty completing tasks. Four other Work Groups have accomplished most of the identified priority tasks: Bridgeporus nobilissimus, Columbia spotted frog, Mardon skipper, and Oregon slender salamander.

Work group conference call updates and participation on specific tasks are open to all interested field personnel. Regional or

State Office funding accompanies tasks.

For additional information please contact:

Rob Huff, Rob_Huff@blm.gov, 503-808-6479, Conservation Planning Coordinator or
Kelli Van Norman, Kelli_VanNorman@blm.gov, 503-808-6606, Inventory Coordinator.

Inventory and Monitoring

To see the types of projects your fellow biologists and botanists have been conducting with ISSSSP funds since the program's inception in 2005, visit the Inventory, Reports and Models of the ISSSSP web page - <http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/sfpnw/issssp/inventories/reports.shtml>

Survey Protocols

Survey protocols exist for many species. However, if BLM/FS field units express a strong need for a specific survey protocol, ISSSSP will sponsor the protocol development. For example, members of the ISSSSP Fungi Work group completed the *Sporocarp Survey Protocol for Macrofungi*, version 1.0 in December. It is posted on the [ISSSSP web site](http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/sfpnw/issssp/inventories/identification.shtml) and should be used when planning fungal survey proposals to submit for ISSSSP project funds.

Field Guides & Identification Keys

Another upcoming tool for fungi is the *Phaeocollybia of the Pacific Northwest* field guide by Lorelei Norvell and BLM botanist Ron Exeter. The 230-page guide has more than 500 photos, species descriptions, and keys for the 25 *Phaeocollybia* known to occur in the PNW. Copies for each BLM and FS field office have been pre-purchased and will be mailed to you in late spring.

Bruce McCune reports that the *Macrolichens of the Pacific Northwest Field Guide* is at OSU Press in the final proof stage and is expected to be printed in April. We also pre-purchased these guides and will distribute them to each BLM and FS field office.

Taxonomy

The Institute for Applied Ecology has completed a project exploring the taxonomy of the vascular plant *Cimicifuga elata* var. *elata* as compared to *C. elata* var. *alpestris*. Please see the [report](#).

Specimen Identification Services

Our regional mollusk specialist Nancy Duncan retired last fall. Vouchers are still required for Sensitive and Strategic terrestrial and aquatic mollusks. Please send the vouchers to Darci Rivers-Pankratz, the ISSSSP Inventory Coordinator Assistant. Darci will get the specimen vouchers to the correct expert for ID verification. Darci's contact information and voucher-ing guidelines are at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/sfpnw/issssp/inventories/identification.shtml>

The ISSSS Program covers the costs of expert ID verification for mollusks, lichens, bryophytes, and fungi. We will establish contacts for identification of other invertebrates so let us know if there are particular species or groups of invertebrates we should focus upon.

Invertebrate Highlight

Before last summer, the Siskiyou short-horned grasshopper (*Chloeaaltis aspasma*) was known from only 5 locations in southwestern Oregon and 1 suspicious location to the north in Benton County, Oregon. In 2008 biologists from Medford BLM found the grasshopper at 15 of 44 areas surveyed in Jackson County, greatly expanding our knowledge about the distribution and abundance of the species. Read the [report](#) for details.

Regional Inventory Contracts

The 2-year regional fungi survey contract focusing on relocating historic fungal sites at 22 100-acre locations in western Oregon is scheduled to end this September. However, because fungal survey conditions last fall were quite dry, we plan to extend the contract through

For additional information about ISSSSP inventory or monitoring efforts, please contact Kelli VanNorman,

Kelli_VanNorman@blm.gov, 503-808-6066,

Botanical Highlight :

Ann DeBolt was contracted by Vale BLM to conduct a biotic soil crust inventory in the Birch Creek area near the Owyhee River in 2008. It was a biodiversity inventory to determine if Sensitive and Strategic biotic soil crust species are present in the area. None were found. However, Ann's methods of sampling 7 different vegetation types and her report summarizing the area's unique geology, the vegetation types with their biotic soil crusts, and ecological condition are a great example of the type of basic inventory work many are doing. Ann's [report](#) is a gem providing valuable information to the Vale District. Other ISSSSP non-vascular surveys east of the Northwest Forest Plan have resulted in new sites and range extensions of Sensitive lichen and bryophyte species as well.

Program Planning

Priority species and information gaps

In 2005, the ISSSSP asked field units to help identify priority species and information gaps in order to determine the most important tasks for the program to work on and fund. We'd like to update the information field units previously provided as many tasks have been accomplished, priorities may have changed, and species have been added to the list since our initial query. In order to get updates from the field for each of the Sensitive species, we'll be sending out a questionnaire as part of the draft list update that will be transmitted to the field this spring. Field units will be asked to update information previously provided and identify new priorities, as needed. Over the course of the summer, we'll process this information to help us identify new high priority species and information gaps to work on over the next few years. Our end product will be an update to our

internal "Implementation Guide", which will serve as an action plan for ISSSSP personnel, and will be a useful tool for field units when submitting projects through the annual ISSSSP Project Proposal Process.

Strategic Species Highlight

The Xerces Society is pulling together information on 46 of our Strategic invertebrate species. They are finding existing location records, identifying habitat, documenting survey methods including identifying the best survey times, and if special expertise is needed, assessing potential habitat on FS/BLM lands including providing coarse scale ArcGIS maps of potential habitat. They are also helping to prioritize future survey efforts by species and geographic areas. The resulting documents and maps will provide a guide for us to conduct surveys for these Strategic invertebrates and determine if they are on FS/BLM lands.

SSSSP Project Proposals Evaluation

The final due date for FY10 ISSSSP project proposals was April 21st. About 60 projects were submitted (10 for fungi). A small panel of ISSSSP personnel and field unit biologists/botanists will evaluate the proposals the week of May 11th. Fungi proposals will be evaluated by the fungi work group. Final decisions on funding for these proposals is expected by mid-June.

For more information, contact:

Rob Huff, Rob_Huff@blm.gov, 503-808-6479, Conservation Planning Coordinator

or

Kelli Van Norman, Kelli_VanNorman@blm.gov, 503-808-6066, Inventory Coordinator.

Conservation Planning

Recently, we've been focused on resolving discrepancies in Documented and Suspected statuses as indicated by our field units versus information presented in Conservation planning documents. There are many instances where a field unit may not have indicated a species as Suspected or Documented, but the species fact sheet, for instance, indicates the existence of a Documented site on that field unit. It's essential to work through these discrepancies in order to provide adequate conservation for the species by ensuring that the species is accurately considered for species conservation needs on all appropriate FS/BLM land bases. This task, however, has proven to be quite time consumptive, and will not likely be finished until the summer, as part of the draft ISSSSP list update review.

In the meantime, conservation planning documents are still being churned out. Here's a select list of documents posted on our website since our last ISSSSP update (October 2008):

1. Conservation Planning Tools: fungi effects bibliography; White papers on habitat creation and timing of projects for the Columbia spotted frog, grazing effects on Columbia spotted frog and management recommendations, and Mardon skipper upland meadows restoration considerations.
2. Updated or new species fact sheets for 13 invertebrates, 67 bryophytes, 6 fungi, 9 lichens, 1 vertebrate.

3. Conservation Assessments: Black salamander, California slender salamander, Larch Mountain salamander, Olympic torrent salamander, and an updated Oregon slender salamander.

Currently 20 Conservation Assessments or Strategies are in various draft stages (all are vascular plants or vertebrates), as are species fact sheets for 5 fungi, 15 lichens and 35 invertebrates.

For more information, contact:

Rob Huff, Rob_Huff@blm.gov, 503-808-6479, Conservation Planning Coordinator

West Coast Fisher Conservation Assessment and Strategy

The draft Conservation Assessment is undergoing revision to consider and incorporate comments received during peer-review and selected internal and external review. We expect to have the revision ready for a final review during May and June and available for use in mid-summer. The final publication will likely not be available until fall or winter.

The draft Conservation Strategy will be sent to the Steering Committee in late April. Following review and comments, the Fisher Bioteam will consider and incorporate changes based on the comments and provide the final draft to the agencies. Availability of the final draft will depend upon the review and comments by the Steering Committee. For more information contact Bob Naney at bnaney@fs.fed.us 509-996-4072. Bob is the FS/BLM co-lead for the project along with Laura Finley, USFWS.

Coordination with State Heritage Programs – Meetings a Success!

In March the ISSSSP had successful separate coordination meetings with both Oregon Natural Heritage Information Center (ORNHIC) and Washington Natural Heritage Program (WNHP). The meeting objective was to provide an opportunity for the ISSSSP and the Heritage Programs to identify issues related to our working relationship that limits or weakens our respective programs or impedes conservation efforts. Once issues are identified, we can work collaboratively to develop solutions and establish an action plan. Both ORNHIC and WNHP were very receptive and solution oriented. This is just the beginning of continued coordination meetings needed to enhance our working relationships.

Main topics included communication, species assessment process, and data entry, sharing and transfer.

Communication - We identified that there are two key audiences – field specialists and the RO/OSO staff. We identified several options for improving communications from something as simple as the Heritage Programs sending the ISSSSP written quarterly updates to the Heritage Program staff attending annual FS/BLM meetings.

Species Assessment Process – Concern has been that the process is not transparent, consistent, and repeatable. We learned about a 2009 NatureServe Conservation Status Factor document which is expected

to resolve these concerns (see below article). The main issue now is how best to make the output from the revised process available to us. Stay tuned.

Data Entry – ORNHIC had a data backlog from a large GeoBOB dataset they received, but that is almost fully entered into Biotics 4. On the FS side, NRIS is still being populated and a similar backlog for ORNHIC and WNHP is anticipated once data entry has been completed in NRIS.

Data Sharing – One issue is that research, academia, State agencies, and other entities that collect species data do not share it on a regular basis with ORNHIC and WNHP. The Heritage Programs need to search it out and request it. Our long-term goal is to change the culture of sharing data and make sharing data with the Heritage Programs a part of what research, academia, states, etc. just do on their own initiative. We brainstormed a list of entities/partners that have data and then will work towards agreements of data sharing. Also marketing the Heritage Program as the information arm for the states and educating others on the role they have in ranking species

statuses, may clarify the importance of sharing their data with ORNHIC/WNHP.

Data Transfer – GeoBOB data are shared with ORNHIC in March and October of each year. GeoBOB data are not yet shared with WNHP, but a data sharing agreement is being worked on. The data transfer to ORNHIC is in the format of a personal geodatabase; ORNHIC has created tools that make part of the transfer electronic and more efficient. Both ORNHIC and WNHP stated that they cannot have a full electronic data transfer directly from GeoBOB or NRIS applications to the Biotics 4 database because there will always be a need for a human to examine the data.

For additional information please contact: Carol Hughes, cshughes@fs.fed.us, 503-808-2661.

NatureServe Revises Conservation Status Factors

(summarized from *NatureServe Conservation Status Factors*, © 2009 NatureServe)

NatureServe's methods have evolved since 1978 and are used by its network of natural heritage programs and conservation data centers throughout North America. The primary purpose of conservation status assessments is to evaluate the potential extinction (or extirpation) risk of elements of biodiversity. NatureServe uses a suite of factors to assess the conservation status of species of plants, animals, or fungi, as well as ecosystems. Conservation status is summarized as a series of ranks from critically imperiled to secure and these ranks may be derived at global, national, or subnational (state/province) levels.

In April 2009, NatureServe published a revision of their 2002 Conservation Status Factors. The revision provides guidance for documentation and assessment of conservation status factors. To date, the process of assigning a conservation status has been qualitative due to the challenges of assessing many thousands species and ecosystems in a timely fashion. This qualitative approach led to issues with consistency, repeatability, and transparency of the status assessments. Also, traditionally, much weight was given to rarity status factors when assigning conservation rank status. In particular, the number of occurrences and population size were considered the primary factors that established the possible range ranks. Final determination of the overall status

rank was then based on consideration of the remaining status factors. Past and ongoing long- and short-term trends and project trends (i.e. threats) were given insufficient weight relative to their importance in most other analyses of extinction risk factors and in other conservation status assessment methodologies.

The effort to minimize these biases and inconsistencies has led to clearer guidance on the definitions of the status factors and to a more transparent, repeatable, and objective approach. To achieve this, the current "black box" ranking method is being replaced with a set of rules and point weightings structured to utilize the status factor information to assign rank categories for indicating conservation status. A tool called the "rank calculator" was developed that automates and standardizes the process of assigning conservation status ranks.

Ten status factors are organized into three broad factor categories - rarity, trends, and threats - and information is recorded for each of the status factors. The "rank calculator" then assigns a conservation status rank, based on weightings assigned to each factor and some conditional rules. Suggested weightings of status factors are 50% for rarity, 30% for trends, and 20% for threats. In the absence of sufficient data to use the calculator, some status ranks will remain temporarily subjective.

NatureServe Revises Conservation Status Factors , continued

Under the rarity factor category, the status factors assessed are range extent, area of occupancy, population size, number of occurrences, number of occurrences or percent area with good viability/ecological integrity, and environmental specificity (only used if both the number of occurrences and area of occupancy are unknown). Under the trends factor category, the status factors assessed are long-term and short-term trends. Under the threats factor category, the status factors assessed are threats (scope, severity, impact, and timing) and intrinsic vulnerability (only used if threats are unknown).

For additional information and details on the NatureServe Conservation Status Factors and the process, please download a copy of the document at <http://www.natureserve.org/publications/library.jsp#nspubs>



Data Management-NRIS TESP (FS)

The NRIS TESP database is now in full use. Legacy data has been migrated and the Forests are now entering new survey and occurrence information. ArcMap tools have been developed allowing for regional, subregional, and forest level reporting and analysis. We are now able to share snapshots of of region-wide or subregional data with partners in the form of a personal geodatabase. Much work still remains to be done, however, and an action plan has been developed identifying tasks that need to be completed.

Our goal is to have the NRIS TESP application complete and accurate within two years. Most of the work will focus on review and editing migrated data and entering missing data sets.

ISSSSP Website

Don't forget to check out our website for all sorts of tools and products to assist you in the management of Special Status and Sensitive Species.

The website includes Species Fact Sheets, Conservation Assessments, Conservation Strategies and Agreements, Site Management Plans, Agency Direction and Species Lists, and Inventory and Monitoring reports, and Identification Service information.

The website address is: www.fs.fed.us/r6/sfpnw/issssp/ For additional information, please contact Carol Hughes, cshughes@fs.fed.us , 503-808-266 1



Contact Information and Feedback

We're looking for feedback. Is this newsletter helpful? Is the format okay, or would you recommend something different? What other kind of information or topics would you like to hear about?

Please send any comments you have to Rob Huff, Rob_Huff@blm.gov

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