

# Interagency Special Status and Sensitive Species Program Update – August 2020

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## Implementing Priority Sensitive Species Conservation Action Plans

FY20 continues to be a year of great change for the ISSSSP. Earlier this year ISSSSP identified high priority sensitive species and developed species-specific Conservation Action Plans that focus our restoration efforts over the next several years. It is hoped that focused internal investments on priority actions, leveraged with partnerships, will result in substantial conservation gains across Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Forest Service (FS) administered lands.

- BLM: There will be verbiage in the FY21 Preliminary Target Allocation (PTA) to implement conservation actions identified in action plans for ISSSSP-identified priority species using the program element code "KE." The ISSSSP continues to use the Budget Proposal Submission SharePoint (BPSS) proposals to fund projects for priority sensitive species actions as identified in the Conservation Action Plans.
- FS: In FY20, the FS began a transition to a more simplified budgeting process in response to congress passing the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020. All permanent salaries, benefits, travel, training, etc. will be funded off the top in FY21 at the regional office out of a new "Salary & Expense" (S&E) budget line item. To implement this, most regionally managed funds, such as ISSSSP, were discontinued and moved into regional and forest base budgets. This resulted in less ability to regionally direct funds to priority species projects, but greater flexibility in forest base budgets to invest in priorities as informed by forests 5-Year Integrated Restoration Plans.

Forests are expected to use an interdisciplinary approach in developing the 5-Year Integrated Restoration Plans that reflect priority species and actions, and to maximize the use of all funding sources and authorities (e.g. K-V, retained receipts, Good Neighbor Authority, etc.) to implement priority species actions. In order to achieve this there is a need for increased communication between forest biologists/botanists and forest leadership, as this will be essential in this new budget approach. It is also important that forests share how forest base allocations are being utilized and coordinate with ISSSSP staff to leverage remaining regional base funds and develop partnership opportunities for priority species and actions.

Implementing the Conservation Action Plans is an important step in working with your state and private partners. The action plans will continue to be updated. A task accomplishment/tracker table has been added to each individual species' plan. The task trackers are not only a tool for ISSSSP to track accomplishments, but an important tool to communicate to leadership that investments are progressing toward improved conservation. ISSSSP team members have started reaching out to field units to update the task trackers by November 13, 2020.

In this issue we highlight a few of our ISSSSP-priority species, sharing the action plan for each, and an example of a field unit implementing projects to address some of the actions in the plans. It's important to note that three of the four species highlighted (Western ridged mussel, Northwestern pond turtle, and Suckley cuckoo bumble bee) have been petitioned for listing under the federal Endangered Species Act.

## Key Points in this issue:

- Actions identified for the 80-ISSSSP-priority species are the main focus of ISSSSP funding.
- ISSSSP had been coordinating with the states and USFWS to identify joint priority species and actions; these species and actions will be added into the ISSSSP-priority species Conservation Action Plans.
- An interagency Conservation Strategy is being developed for the Foothill yellow-legged frog.
- A new ISSSSP list is being worked on, with a target transmittal of next spring

## Implementing ISSSSP-priority Conservation Action Plans-Highlights

Action plans have been developed for 80 sensitive species identified as ISSSSP-priority. The ISSSSP funds projects that implement the actions identified in those plans. The following four highlights display the action plans for the four species, and how specific field units are implementing projects to meet the actions identified in the plans.

### Western Ridged Mussel (*Gonidea angulata*)

The action plan identifies the following actions:

1. Implement management actions to maintain and restore sites. Actions include:
  - Modify or mitigate water diversions, withdrawals to benefit this species.
  - Restrict or control grazing at sites, through timing and use changes, or fencing of sites.
  - Assess opportunities where watershed restoration can benefit this species; incorporate proactive measures into project design.
2. Investigate which Oregon and Washington fish species serve as glochidial hosts for *G. angulata*, so that its reproductive potential in this region can be better understood
3. Revisit historic sites to assess current population status. Examine the age class structure of existing *G. angulata* populations to determine whether or not populations are reproducing. Assess and monitor population abundances over time.
4. Conduct surveys to new areas, radiating out from known locations. Utilize eDNA markers to help reduce costs.

The Prineville BLM District has developed a project that addresses action items 1, 3, and 4 above. The District has a scattered record of freshwater mussel observations spanning from the 1970s to today. These observations include three genera of freshwater mussels, including the sensitive species, Western Ridged Mussel. Hydrologist Anna Smith and Fisheries Biologist Jeff Moss have been leading a focused sampling effort on the district. The goal of the project, to understand the amount, distribution, age and health of freshwater mussels across Prineville BLM's larger, fish bearing, rivers and streams, is being accomplished through a sub-contract with PNW freshwater mussel expert Emilie Blevins of the Xerces Society. With help from Scott Miller at the BLM's National Operations Center, they've tailored existing survey protocols (e.g. the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the BLM's 2008 aquatic mollusk protocol) to meet their needs.

At a random selection of river sites on district lands, an initial pass is being made to inventory for presence/absence and to tally the number of mussels by species found in a reach. Where mussels are found, a more detailed inventory is also being conducted. Metrics will include linear density of mussels by species and the establishment of plots to monitor age class and health over time. There will also be site management plans written at two Western Ridged Mussel sites on BLM land to address threats to mussel populations. This project is already yielding valuable information about the distribution and abundance of freshwater mussels on the district and provides a valuable blueprint that can be applied to other lands and waters.



Western pearlshell and floaters, South Fork John Day River.  
Photo by Emilie Blevins



Western ridged mussels, John Day River. Photo by Emilie Blevins

For additional information about ISSSSP Inventory and Monitoring Work, contact Kelli Van Norman.

## Implementing ISSSSP-priority Conservation Action Plans-Highlights, cont.

### **Botrychium pumicola (Pumice moonwort)**

The action plan for this species lists the following:

1. Implement Management Considerations identified within the Conservation Assessment (CA, pages 43-46) and Draft Conservation Strategy. Briefly those include:

- Implement management disturbances (10-30 year cycle) at montane sites.
- At montane sites, create and/or maintain early to mid-successional plant communities through vegetation management projects, including timber stand thinning and removal of competing shrubs.
- Consider mowing or the use of prescribed fire to achieve objectives.
- Treat invasive plants found at sites.
- Control recreational hiking, camping and off-highway vehicle use at sites through placement of boulders, berms, closures, trail re-routes, or moving campgrounds or other developments.
- Fence or otherwise protect sites from livestock grazing.

The species has been known in Central Oregon since at least the 1890's, when the first population was documented at Crater Lake National Park. Other sites were located after that in alpine habitat. But beginning in 1990, hundreds more populations were located on federal lands at lower elevations within the montane zone, within frost pocket openings (cold air basins) in a lodgepole pine matrix. The species thrives in young volcanic soils and cold temperatures. Since about 2010 botanists began noticing the frost pocket habitat in the montane zone, which had remained in a relatively stable and tree-free state, were quickly being flooded with young lodgepoles; at the same time they noticed the montane moonwort populations were experiencing a steep decline in numbers. While the reason has not been positively determined, the rapid filling of moonwort habitat within the same timeframe points to climate change and warmer winters. Lodgepole germinants, which had previously been "frost-heaved" out of the ground, were no longer experiencing that to the same degree.

While botanists do not decisively know why the moonwort has declined in the montane zone – it is likely there are multiple factors operating together – the incursion of the young trees is likely not helping them. Botanists on the Fremont-Winema and Deschutes National Forests have been implementing actions to address action items 1 and 2 in the action plan, initiating removal of these young trees from selected moonwort populations in the hope that it will renew its habitat and its numbers. Monitoring suggests that so far this has made no particular difference, but the monitoring will continue; it is likely that spores will need to find their way back into these sites and how long that may take is not known. Botanists continue to ask questions and discuss with researchers, hoping that we are moving forward toward a better understanding of this problem and how best to address it.



Recently-cut lodgepole pines from a site still populated with *Botrychium pumicola*, 2020. YCC crews will pile the slash outside of the site.



Example of lodgepoles entering a previously-open *Botrychium* site.



Heroic efforts of YCC crews took two summers to remove the lodgepoles at this site.

Conservation Action Highlight write-up and photos provided by Charmane Powers, District Botanist, Bend/Ft. Rock Ranger District,

## Implementing ISSSSP-priority Conservation Action Plans-Highlights, cont.

### Northwestern pond turtle (*Actinemys marmorata*)

The action plan for this species includes:

1. Implement Oregon-wide survey effort to determine current status of sites, including threats
2. Create site management plans as needed, and implement management actions to maintain or restore occupied habitat:
  - Protect or restore nesting habitat.
  - Create new habitat for introductions.
  - Implement bullfrog and non-native fish control.
  - Control and remove non-native tall vegetation overgrowing nesting and uplands habitat.
  - Purchase or trade for threatened habitats on other landownerships.
  - Create basking sites with tree/log placement or artificial rafts.
  - Create security cover and basking areas for juveniles by planting or creation of aquatic brush piles.
  - Minimize disturbance in nesting areas. Utilize seasonal restrictions, traffic control devices.
  - Utilize educational outreach, patrols to prevent illegal collection and release of pet turtles.
  - Move or utilize seasonal closures for roads near occupied sites to reduce road mortality. Construct tunnels or culverts to help reduce road conflicts turtles.
  - More details about some of these actions can be found in the Conservation Assessment (CA, pages 49-52) and ODFW Best Management Practices (BMP, pages 20-59). Additional actions include:
    - In areas with high nestling mortality, utilize exclosures around nests to reduce predation.
    - Control or move recreational activity from higher quality habitat or occupied areas. Use signage, seasonal closures, or move infrastructure (trails, facilities).



Cheran Cavanaugh from the Fremont-Winema National Forest has been leading the effort to implement a number of projects to address the actions identified above. They adopted two grid cells as part of the Oregon-wide survey effort led by ODFW (action 1 above), have gated areas to protect turtle use of a pond from motor vehicles, created security cover through placement of vegetation piles, added basking structures to two ponds, and restored nesting sites near the pond through juniper reduction and an exclusion fence to protect the site from grazing (many items under action2). Pond turtles have been seen using the basking structures, including some younger turtles, indicating reproduction has recently been successful at the pond.



Some larger junipers were placed in the pond to provide basking habitat



Soon after the basking structures were added to the pond, pond turtles began using them.

All photos by Cheran Cavanaugh, Fremont-Winema NF



A ponderosa pine hazard tree added to the pond for basking

## Implementing ISSSSP-priority Conservation Action Plans-Highlights, cont.

### Bumble bees (Western Bumble bee, *Bombus occidentalis*; Suckley Cuckoo Bumble Bee, *Bombus suckleyi*)

The action plan for these two species includes:

1. Determine distribution, population status.
  - Participate in the PNW Bumble Bee Atlas. Adopt cells for survey.
2. Develop site management plans, as needed, and protect known sites and areas near known sites.
  - Restrict or manage livestock grazing. Fence out key habitats.
  - Reduce conifer and shrub encroachment into meadows or open forest habitat.
  - Supplemental plantings for adequate nectar and pollen, including road-sides and meadow restoration.
  - Control or redirect recreation use away from occupied habitats. Move trails or use other control devices. Utilize signs, brochures, and interpretation to educate recreationalists.
  - Utilize prescribed fire to maintain habitat; time prescribed burning and mowing and limit percent of area burned/mowed at one time.
  - Address dense non-native grasses, and coordinate management of noxious weeds between wildlife biologists and botanists.



*Bombus occidentalis*. Photo by Cheran Cavanaugh, Fremont-Winema NF

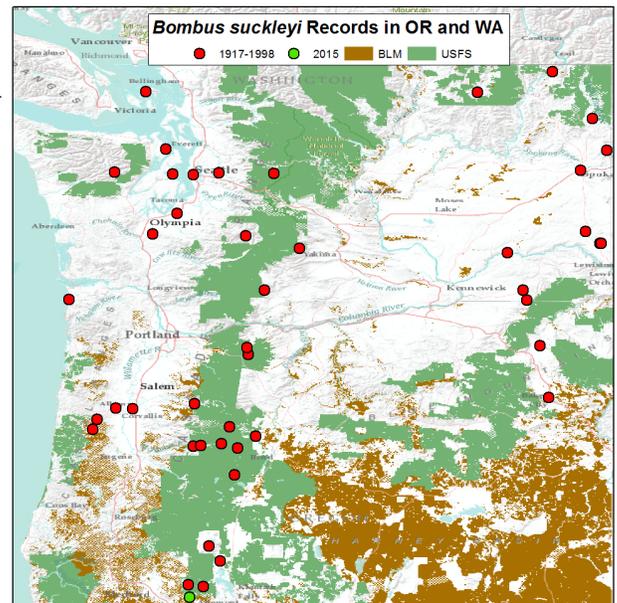
The first priority actions for each species are to determine distribution and population status through participating in the PNW Bumble Bee Atlas (<https://www.pnwbumblebeeatlas.org/>). This is the 3rd year of the cSWG (competitive state wildlife grants) PNW Bumble Bee Atlas grant, which expires this year. Both state wildlife agencies (WDFW, ODFW) along with The Xerces Society have a new cSWG proposal submitted and hope to hear this fall if it's been selected. A number of National Forests and BLM Districts have been participating in the project, with biologists adopting grid cells and conducting surveys. The ISSSSP has contributed funds to the overall project as well, to help cover more remote parts of National Forests and BLM Districts.

The PNW Bumble Bee Atlas and Xerces Society personnel also accomplished a number of actions that encompassed FS and BLM lands or training needs for FS and BLM personnel, including:

- Delivering 6 bumble bee identification workshops in Oregon and Washington to 292 individuals.
- Collecting and verifying 5,685 bumble bee records in Oregon and Washington. 3,179 of those records were from FS or BLM lands.
- Conducting 149 surveys on FS and BLM lands, including surveys of 73 grid cells; surveys included five high-priority grid cells on the Okanogan-Wenatchee NF, where two new species of bumble bee were discovered for the atlas (see <https://www.xerces.org/blog/bombus-kirbiellus>).
- Verifying 51 western bumble bee and 5 Morrison's bumble bees on FS and BLM lands.



*Bombus occidentalis*. Photo by Alan Dyck, Mt. Hood NF (retired)



Records of *Bombus suckleyi*, relative to FS and BLM lands.

From Species Fact Sheet, 2017:

<https://www.fs.fed.us/r6/sfpnw/issssp/documents5/sfs-iihy-bombus-suckleyi-2017-08.docx>

## ISSSSP Coordination with States, USFWS

For the past few years, ISSSSP personnel have been meeting with their counterparts in state agencies and the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to review sensitive species that we have in common with the state's "Species of Greatest Conservation Need", sensitive species, and USFWS Species of Concern and species in queue for federal listing review/determination. Through this coordination we are identifying priority species among the agencies, key information gaps or conservation needs for those species, conservation actions needed to address those gaps and needs, and who, when, and how much funding it will take to implement each action.

We've completed our meetings with the Oregon Biodiversity Information Center, Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, and USFWS on invertebrate species in Oregon. We're almost finished with our review of wildlife species in Oregon (with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) and USFWS), and are close to completion with Oregon fish species (again, ODFW and USFWS). Meetings with Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and USFWS on wildlife and invertebrate species are also close to completion.

Many conservation actions include a collaborative investment between the agencies, with many of the BLM/FS efforts accomplished by ISSSSP personnel. Some actions though will require field unit assistance, and our overarching goal is to include these species and actions in our ISSSSP-priority species action plans, and encourage field unit implementation of these. By developing joint priority species and actions with the states we are well positioned to use our Good Neighbor and other authorities to work across jurisdictional boundaries and leverage state and USFWS resources to increase the pace and scale of restoration for these imperiled species. Since 2016 ODFW and the Forest Service have entered into multiple Good Neighbor agreements across Oregon accomplishing aspen restoration, closing roads through gate installation and camouflaging entrances, maintenance of early seral and meadow habitat, steelhead and salmon spawning habitat improvements, white-nose syndrome monitoring, and western pond turtle surveys.

We plan to initiate meetings on sensitive botanical species in Oregon this coming fall, and in the near future, to do the same in Washington. Contact Rob Huff for more information.

## Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) Agreements between BLM and ODFW

In July the BLM Oregon State Office initiated a 3-year GNA Financial Assistance Agreement with ODFW for "Aquatic Resource Management and Monitoring." The primary objective of this partnership is to work together to better understand aquatic species distributions and population trends, as well as the quality of their respective aquatic habitats; that way we'll be in a better position to conduct aquatic restoration. The GNA policy emphasizes restoration services, which also meets the intent of the Dept of Interior Secretarial priorities to move toward shared conservation stewardship with states. With this in mind, we are talking with ODFW to initiate another GNA agreement this fall, but this time focused on terrestrial species. The intention is to provide a financial instrument through which field level BLM and ODFW personnel can more easily partner on shared projects. It's not necessarily a promise of BLM funds to ODFW, but it does set us up to more easily plan and move BLM funds to ODFW for coordinated projects if funding becomes available.

Please contact Kelli Van Norman if you have any questions about the terrestrial wildlife GNA and Scott Lightcap regarding the aquatic GNA.

## Next Sensitive Species List Update

We are currently in the initial stages of updating our FS/BLM Sensitive species list. The list was last updated in spring 2019, but since that last update, both the Washington Natural Heritage Program (WNHP) and the Oregon Biodiversity Information Center (ORBIC) updated the state ranks for a number of species. Since our Sensitive species are partially determined by state ranks, a review and update of our Sensitive list is in order.

This year, our process for updating the list is different. We have reviewed the ranks for all animal and botanical species, and identified those species that, if documented on FS/BLM lands, would be Sensitive. What is different from previous list update efforts is that this time we have asked ORBIC to mine data by querying multiple databases to determine documented presence of a species on a Forest or BLM District. This relatively thorough assessment of existing data creates a more rigorous process for identifying when these rare or little-known species occur on federal lands. After this thorough assessment, we'll work with Forests/BLM Districts to ensure the data identifying the species as "documented" on the field unit are accurate and the sites are likely extant or indicative of presence of the species. It's expected this coordination with Forests and BLM Districts will occur this winter, with a likely new Sensitive species list transmitted late spring.

If you have any questions about this new process, feel free to contact Carol Hughes or Rob Huff.

## Conservation Planning Documents

ISSSSP Conservation Planning includes the creation of informational documents such as species fact sheets for the little known SSSS (fungi, lichens, bryophytes, invertebrates), as well as more detailed conservation and management oriented documents (Conservation Assessments, Conservation Strategies, Conservation Agreements, Site Management Plans) for higher-priority species or species with more information known about them. Conservation Planning also includes planning and implementation of habitat restoration, enhancement, protection, and maintenance projects.

### Species Fact Sheets

The ISSSSP is trying to keep species fact sheets for sensitive lichens, bryophytes, fungi, and invertebrates current, so that our field biologists and botanists have the most up-to-date information about these cryptic or little known species. As such, we're trying to make sure every species fact sheet is no older than 5 years. We're on track to get caught up to that goal. Sensitive fungi, lichen and bryophyte fact sheets are all up-to-date. Invertebrate fact sheets that are older than 5 years are all under a contract or an agreement to be completed in the near future.

The following fact sheets have been posted since the last ISSSSP update:

Invertebrates (35): *Aeshna sitchensis*, *Aeshna subarctica*, *Boloria astarte*, *Boloria bellona*, *Boloria freija*, *Bombus kirbiellus* (*balteatus*), *Bombus vagans*, *Callophrys gryneus chalcosiva*, *Callophrys gryneus rosneri*, *Coenagrion interrogatum*, *Colias nastes*, *Cupido comyntas*, *Fluminicola turbiniformis*, *Gomphus lynnae*, *Habrodais grunus*, *Helicodiscus salmonaceus*, *Juga newberryi*, *Lycaena cupreus*, *Nanonemoura wahkeena*, *Neothremma andersoni*, *Oeneis chryxus valerata*, *Oeneis melissa*, *Pisidium ultramontanum*, *Plebejus icarioides blackmorei*, *Plebejus lupini spangelatus*, *Polites peckius*, *Polites themistocles*, *Pristiloma idahoense*, *Pristiloma johnsoni*, *Pristiloma wascoense*, *Pristinicola hemphilli*, *Pyrgulopsis owyheensis*, *Rhyacophila chandleri*, *Rhyacophila leechi*, *Speyeria zerene bremneri*.

Lichens and Bryophytes (1): *Pseudocyphellaria hawaiiensis* (*Pseudocyphellaria perpetua*)

Fungi (10): *Chamonixia caespitosa*, *Dermocybe humboldtensis*, *Gastroboletus vividus*, *Gymnomyces fragrans*, *Mythicomycetes corneipes*, *Pseudorhizina californica* (*Gyromitra californica*), *Rhizopogon brunneifibrillosus*, *Rhizopogon chamaleontinus*, *Rhizopogon exiguus*, *Rhizopogon inquinatus*.

The following documents have been posted since the last ISSSSP update:

**Conservation assessments** for Sensitive fungi. This comprehensive update includes a number of Appendices.

**Site Management Plans** for two sites with Townsend's big-eared bat on the Willamette National Forest.

**Conservation Management Actions:** *Callophrys polios* and *Iliamna latibracteata* habitat restoration projects.

**Conservation planning tools:** Fungi Annotated Bibliography, Fungi "cheat sheet", Lichen and Bryophyte "cheat sheet", Pacific lamprey Best Management Practices, Pacific lamprey Guidelines for evaluating and providing passage.

For additional information about ISSSSP Conservation Planning contact Rob Huff.

## Foothill yellow-legged frog Conservation Strategy

ISSSSP personnel Rob Huff and Kelli Van Norman, along with Forest Service biologist Barbara Adams, have been working with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife in an US Fish and Wildlife Service-led effort to develop a Conservation Strategy for the foothill yellow-legged frog in Oregon. The species was petitioned for listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) with a decision due in 2022. The species is a stream-dwelling amphibian and mainly occurs within the Roseburg and Medford BLM Districts, and the Umpqua and Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forests. The Strategy would cover all land ownerships where the species occurs, with the intent of providing a sound strategy for the conservation of the species, making listing under ESA unnecessary.

Currently, the team has identified a core area where more robust populations occur, where conservation actions for the species would be focused to maintain and improve habitat. The team developed a threats matrix at the 4th-field watershed scale throughout the core area, and held interagency field-level conference calls on the result, where we received informative feedback from the field on the matrix. The team is currently collating and drafting conservation recommendations to address threats, drawing from existing documents that identify proactive measures for this and other aquatic species. The goal of the team is to have a completed draft Conservation Strategy sometime late fall 2020 for field-level review.

In addition, Mark Linnell and Ray Davis from the Forest Service are updating the 2006 Biomapper foothill yellow-legged frog habitat model using MaxEnt software and recent data. Part of the project compares the new model to the earlier model and they are building an ensemble model that combines three distinct stream layers producing a final ensemble model to reflect suitable conditions for the species.

For additional information please contact Rob Huff or Kelli Van Norman.

## GeoBOB - Wildlife & Botany Data Resources

BLM Wildlife, Botany, and Fisheries Data Coordinator Chelsea Waddell recently took a new job with the US Fish and Wildlife Service in Portland. Congratulations Chelsea! We're hoping a replacement can be hired by early to mid fall. In the meantime data requests or other needs will be honored by existing staff depending on expertise needed. For now, the point of contact for any GeoBOB questions or needs is John Wilson at the Oregon State Office ([johnwilson@blm.gov](mailto:johnwilson@blm.gov); 503-808-6579).

## New Website for Bumble Bee Identification

This website is still under development, and has a Washington slant, but is also a useful tool for Oregon:  
<https://www.washingtonbumblebees.org>

## Specimen Identification Services

When FS/BLM Sensitive or FS survey and manage non-vascular plant and fungi species are collected and their identity verified, the final step is to curate the voucher specimen and give it to the regional repository: Oregon State University Herbarium (OSC) and University of Washington Burke Museum Herbarium (WTU). From 2008-2015 when both FS and BLM had survey and manage requirements, we received over 1,000 vouchers per year. Darci Rivers-Pankratz coordinates all aspects of the specimen ID services and got a little behind on the curation while keeping up with the immediate needs of obtaining expert ID services. She has now caught up on the curation backlog. In 2019, 1000 fungal vouchers were delivered to OSC. This year Darci has completed curation of over 1,000 lichens and bryophytes awaiting delivery to OSC and 133 lichens, 136 bryophytes and 47 fungal vouchers to WTU once allowed due to COVID-19 restrictions. There are a number of species, particularly of survey and manage species, that the herbaria have enough vouchers for certain geographic areas and not enough storage. Darci will be contacting the field units that collected these to determine if she should return them to those field units or dispose of them.

## Contact Information and Feedback

### Interagency personnel:

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 eries Data Coordinator

### We're always looking for

**feedback.** Is this newsletter helpful? What other kind of information or topics would you like to hear about?

Please send any comments you have to Rob Huff.

## Please visit the ISSSSP website for more information:

<https://www.fs.fed.us/r6/sfpnw/issssp/>

