



Endangered Species Act (ESA)

"Nothing is more priceless and more worthy of preservation than the rich array of animal life with which our country has been blessed." —President Nixon, upon signing the Endangered Species Act

Overview

The Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA) was signed on December 28, 1973, and provides for the conservation of species that are endangered or threatened throughout all or a significant portion of their range, and the conservation of the ecosystems on which they depend. The ESA replaced the Endangered Species Conservation Act of 1969; it has been amended several times.

A "species" is considered endangered if it is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range. A species is considered threatened if it is likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future.

There are approximately 1,880 species listed under the ESA. Of these species, approximately 1,310 are found in part or entirely in the U.S. and its waters; the remainder are foreign species.

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) share responsibility for implementing the ESA. Generally, USFWS manages land and freshwater species, while NMFS manages marine and "anadromous" species. NMFS has jurisdiction over approximately 60 listed species.

How Does the ESA Define "Species"?

"Species" includes subspecies, or, for vertebrates only, "distinct population segments (DPSs)". Pacific salmon are listed as "evolutionarily significant units (ESUs)", which are essentially equivalent to DPSs for the purpose of the ESA.

Programs under the ESA

The ESA provides for different programs to conserve endangered and threatened species:

- Listing (Section 4)
- Critical Habitat (Section 4)
- Recovery (Section 4)
- Cooperation with States (Section 6)
- Interagency Consultation (Section 7)
- International Cooperation (Section 8)
- Enforcement of the ESA (Section 9)
- Permits & Habitat Conservation Plan (Section 10)

