

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Bureau of Land Management
Oregon State Office
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Portland, OR 97208

In Reply Refer to:
6840 (OR-931) P

March 24, 2003

EMS TRANSMISSION 03/26/2003
Instruction Memorandum No. OR-2003-054
Expires: 9/30/2004

To: All District Managers
From: State Director
Subject: Oregon/Washington Special Status Species Policy

Program Area: Special Status Species

Purpose: To reissue Oregon/Washington (OR/WA) Special Status Species (SSS) policy and to reaffirm Bureau Policy direction that actions requiring authorization or approval by the Bureau are consistent with the conservation needs of SSS and do not contribute to the need to list SSS under the provisions of the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

Policy/Action: OR/WA Districts are responsible for applying the [Bureau Manual Section 6840](#) and the [OR/WA SSS policy](#), as clarified in this directive, to SSS including: Bureau Sensitive, Bureau Assessment, and Bureau Tracking species that are documented or suspected to occur on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) administered lands.

OR/WA Districts are responsible for prioritizing their SSS efforts in developing District strategies and programs to manage and conserve the following: Federal endangered, threatened, proposed and candidate species; State endangered and threatened species; and Bureau Sensitive and Bureau Assessment species. Factors to consider are: levels of threats and impacts to species; the status of species as ordered above; whether the BLM has the capability to significantly affect the conservation status of the species through management; the existence of recovery or conservation strategies and plans and other formalized conservation mechanisms; potential and existing cooperating agencies and organizations; budgetary constraints; available expertise and skills; and national and regional priorities.

Review of effects of proposed actions: BLM Districts are responsible to assess and review the effects of a proposed action on Bureau Sensitive and/or Bureau Assessment species. To comply with Bureau policy, Districts may use one or more of the following techniques:

- a. Evaluation of species-habitat associations and presence of suitable or potential habitat
- b. Application of conservation strategies, plans, and other formalized conservation mechanisms
- c. Review of existing survey records, inventories, and spatial data

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- d. Utilization of professional research, literature, and other technology transfer sources
 - e. Use of expertise, both internal and external, that is based on documented, substantiated professional rationale
 - f. Complete pre-project survey, monitoring, and inventory for species that are based on technically sound and logistically feasible methods while considering staffing and funding constraints

Conservation and Management: BLM Districts are responsible for conservation of Bureau Sensitive or Bureau Assessment species that are affected by their management actions. Where Districts determine that additional conservation measures are necessary, options for conservation include but are not limited to:

- a. Modifying a project (such as timing, placement, intensity or dropping)
- b. Using buffers to protect sites
- c. Implementing habitat restoration actions (i.e., actions to benefit a species)

BLM Districts are responsible for documenting the effects of Bureau proposed actions to Bureau Sensitive and Bureau Assessment species through a systematic, interdisciplinary evaluation in the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA)/decision making process. NEPA decision documents must disclose the effects of proposed actions on Bureau Sensitive and Bureau Assessment species. BLM Districts will document that District decisions would not contribute to the need to list Bureau Sensitive and Bureau Assessment species under the ESA.

Documented and Suspected: The OR/WA SSS Policy will only be applied to those SSS, which are Documented or Suspected to occur on Bureau administered lands. The Districts are responsible for identifying which species are Documented or Suspected for their respective units. The State Office maintains the comprehensive database of the Documented and Suspected SSS on BLM lands in Oregon and Washington. It is based on data from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration – Fisheries, the States and Natural Heritage Programs, each BLM District, and other sources.

Timeframe: Effective immediately.

Background: [Instruction Memorandum No. OR-91-57](#), Oregon/Washington Special Status Species Policy, established [OR/WA policy on SSS management](#), expanding on the requirements in Bureau Manual Sections 1734 (Inventory and Monitoring Coordination), 6600 (Inventory and Monitoring), and 6840 (Special Status Species Management). In that directive, the State Director designated sensitive species for Oregon and Washington under the category Bureau Sensitive plus establishing two additional categories of plant and animal species (Assessment and Tracking). Bureau Tracking species are not considered as SSS for management purposes.

In January 2001, the [Bureau Manual Section 6840 Special Status Species Management](#) was revised. The Manual requires that actions requiring authorizations or approval by the BLM are consistent with the conservation needs of special status species and do not contribute to the need to list any SSS, either under the provisions of the ESA or other provision of the Bureau Manual (Bureau Manual 6840.02). Best professional judgment and discretion is critical to the implementation and application of the Bureau Manual and State policy set in this directive.

The BLM 6840 Manual provides overall direction and criteria for designating Bureau Sensitive species; it states the designation is normally used for species that occur on Bureau-administered land for which the

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BLM has the capability to significantly affect the conservation of the species through management (6840.06E). The Manual also requires coordination with the States in the designation of Bureau Sensitive species. The OR/WA policy designates the two additional categories of Bureau Assessment and Bureau Tracking. Bureau Sensitive, Bureau Assessment, and Bureau Tracking status in Oregon tiers to Oregon Natural Heritage Program's Lists 1 through 4. List 1 species are Bureau Sensitive species; List 2 species are Bureau Assessment species (except List 2 fungi and invertebrates which become Bureau Tracking); and List 3 and 4 species are Bureau Tracking species. In Washington State, the Washington Natural Heritage Program and State status determine Bureau Sensitive, Bureau Assessment, and Bureau Tracking species. The OR/WA State Director maintains final discretion for designating Bureau Sensitive species.

Manual/Handbook Sections Affected: Manual 6840 Special Status Species

Coordination: OR931, Branch of Biological Sciences; OR935, Interagency Northwest Forest Plan Group; OR958.2, Realty Records Section; Selected Districts and Field Offices

Contact: Barb Hill, Wildlife Biologist, Oregon State Office, (503) 808-6052; Joan SeEVERS, Botanist, Oregon State Office, (503) 808-6048.

Districts with Unions are reminded to notify their unions of this Instruction Memorandum and satisfy any bargaining

obligations before implementation. Your servicing Human Resources Office or Labor Relations Specialist can provide you assistance in this matter.

Signed by
Elaine M. Brong

Authenticated by
Cindy Fredrickson

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