Science and Public Policy

Solutions and Challenges

Toward Ensuring Scientific Integrity in Public Policy

The science used in the formation of public policy should always be independently verified by a rigorous peer review process.

The regulated community deserves no less.

HB 1307 was introduced in the Washington Legislature to set scientific integrity and peer review standards in statute.

Independent Peer Review

Independent peer review should be performed by qualified scientists who are not funded or supported by agencies with interests in the policy being developed.

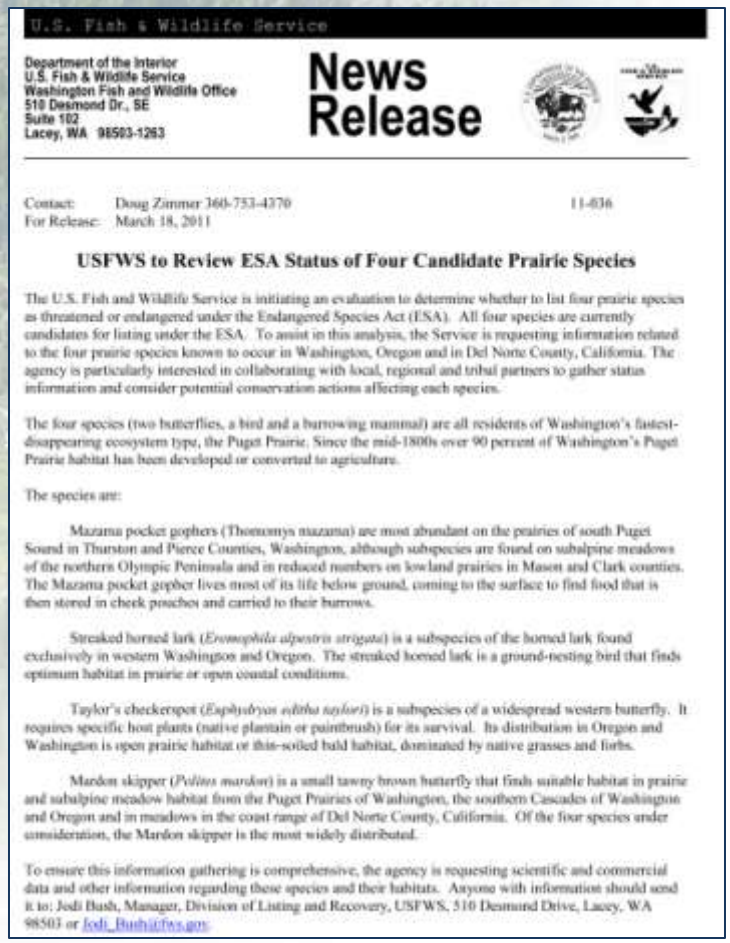
The Environmental Sciences Independent Peer Review Institute (ESIPRI) is a non-profit organiztion providing such review services.

(www.esipri.org)

Current Example

On March 18th, the USFWS announced an evaluation to determine whether four ESA candidate species should be listed as either threatened or endangered.

All four are resident in western Washington.



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Department of the Interior
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Washington Fish and Wildlife Office
510 Desmond Dr., SE
Suite 102
Lacey, WA 98503-1263

News Release

Contact: Doug Zimmer 360-753-4370 11-036
For Release: March 18, 2011

USFWS to Review ESA Status of Four Candidate Prairie Species

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is initiating an evaluation to determine whether to list four prairie species as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). All four species are currently candidates for listing under the ESA. To assist in this analysis, the Service is requesting information related to the four prairie species known to occur in Washington, Oregon and in Del Norte County, California. The agency is particularly interested in collaborating with local, regional and tribal partners to gather status information and consider potential conservation actions affecting each species.

The four species (two butterflies, a bird and a burrowing mammal) are all residents of Washington's fastest-disappearing ecosystem type, the Puget Prairie. Since the mid-1800s over 90 percent of Washington's Puget Prairie habitat has been developed or converted to agriculture.

The species are:

Mazama pocket gophers (Thomomys mazama) are most abundant on the prairies of south Puget Sound in Thurston and Pierce Counties, Washington, although subspecies are found on subalpine meadows of the northern Olympic Peninsula and in reduced numbers on lowland prairies in Mason and Clark counties. The Mazama pocket gopher lives most of its life below ground, coming to the surface to find food that is then stored in cheek pouches and carried to their burrows.

Streaked horned lark (*Eremophila alpestris strigata*) is a subspecies of the horned lark found exclusively in western Washington and Oregon. The streaked horned lark is a ground-nesting bird that finds optimum habitat in prairie or open coastal conditions.

Taylor's checkerspot (*Euphydryas editha taylori*) is a subspecies of a widespread western butterfly. It requires specific host plants (native plantain or paintbrush) for its survival. Its distribution in Oregon and Washington is open prairie habitat or thin-soiled bald habitat, dominated by native grasses and forbs.

Mardon skipper (*Polites mardon*) is a small tawny brown butterfly that finds suitable habitat in prairie and subalpine meadow habitat from the Puget Prairies of Washington, the southern Cascades of Washington and Oregon and in meadows in the coast range of Del Norte County, California. Of the four species under consideration, the Mardon skipper is the most widely distributed.

To ensure this information gathering is comprehensive, the agency is requesting scientific and commercial data and other information regarding these species and their habitats. Anyone with information should send it to: Jodi Bush, Manager, Division of Listing and Recovery, USFWS, 510 Desmond Drive, Lacey, WA 98503 or Jodi_Bush@fws.gov.

Current Example

The key to look for:

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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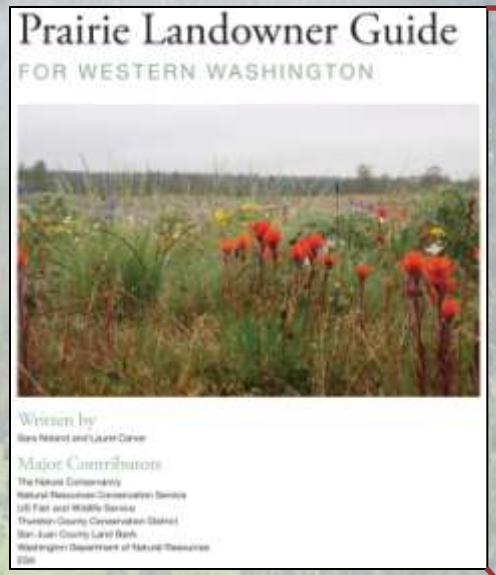
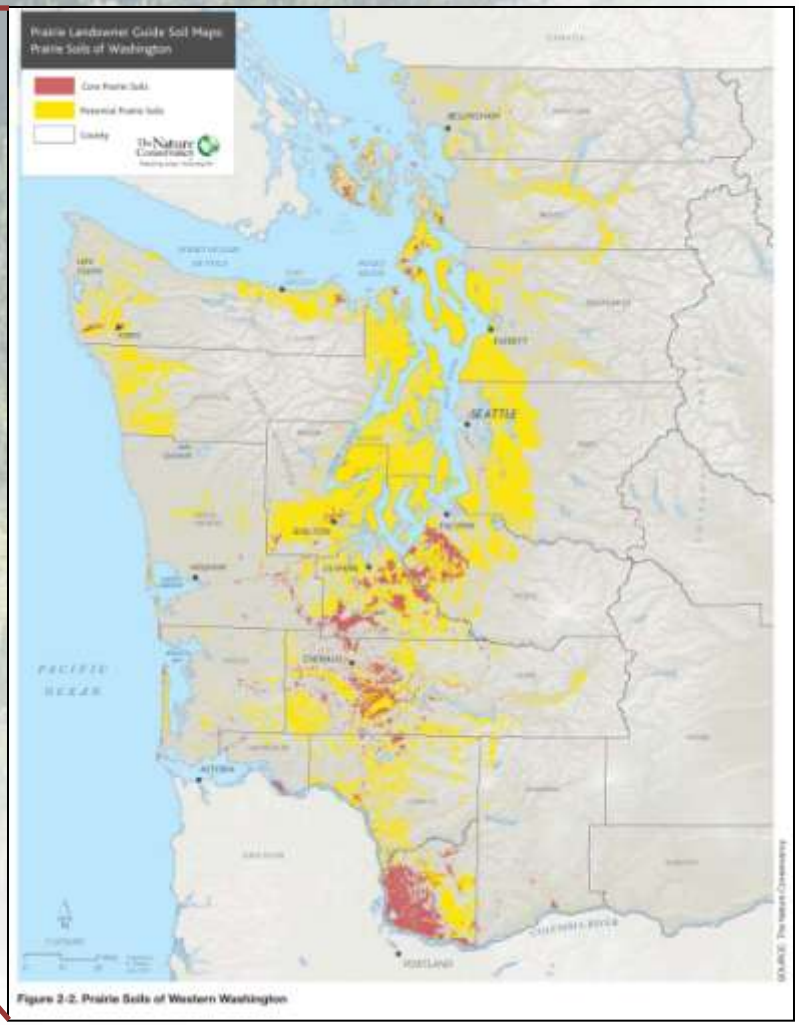
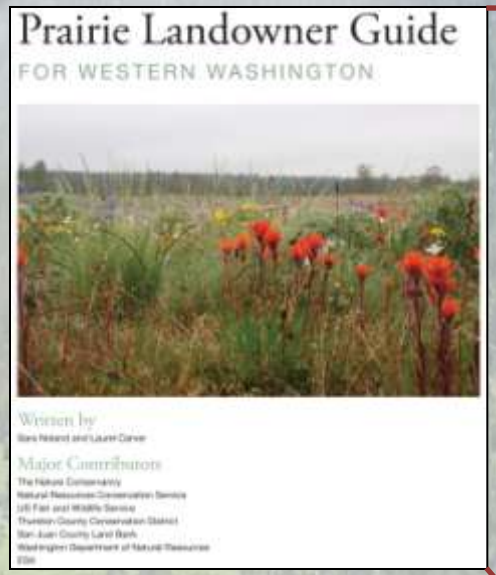
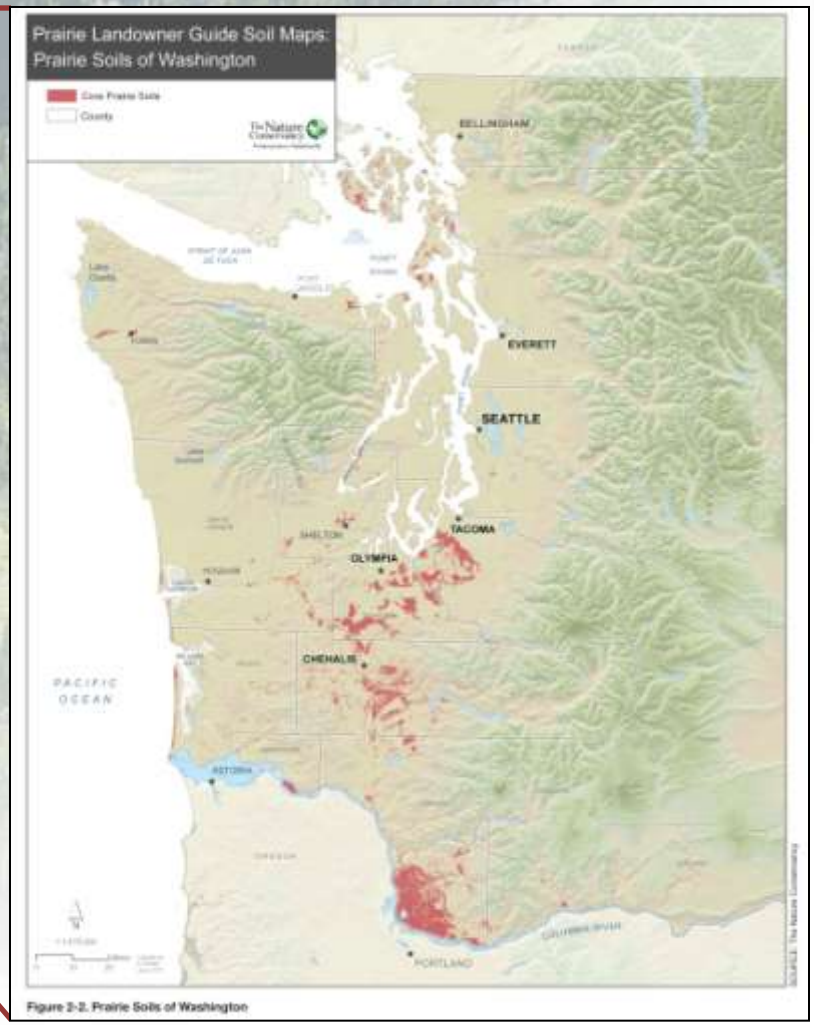




Version 1
Announced May 25th

Current Example





Version 2
Announced July 12th

Current Example

In response to a question on the reason for the changes to the guide:

> "The soils table was incomplete and the potential soils delineated on the maps gave a false impression of prairie extent."

Building on the Current Example

On May 10th, the USFWS announced a six year work plan to address the needs of the 251 species on the ESA candidate list as part of a settlement agreement with WildEarth Guardians.

The four western Washington species are included.

Building on the Current Example

On July 12th, USFWS made another announcement, building on the May plan as part of a settlement with the Center for Biological Diversity.

They will now evaluate 757 species (36 in Washington) for ESA listing consideration by the end of 2018.

Building on the Current Example

36 Washington species under ESA consideration

American wolverine	Greater sage grouse	Roy Prairie pocket gopher
Basalt juga	Hoko vertigo	Shelton pocket gopher
Black-footed albatross	Lake Sammamish kokanee	Streaked horned lark
Brush prairie pocket gopher	Mardon skipper butterfly	Tacoma pocket gopher
Burrington jumping-slug	Masked duskysnail	Taylor's checkerspot butterfly
Cathlamet pocket gopher	Northern leopard frog	Tenino pocket gopher
Chelan mountainsnail	Northern wormwood	Umtunum desert-buckwheat
Columbia basin sage grouse	Olympia pocket gopher	Washington ground squirrel
Columbia duskysnail	Olympic pocket gopher	Western yellow-billed cuckoo
Columbia Oregonian	Oregon spotted frog	White bluffs bladderpod
Dalles sideband	Pacific fisher	White-tailed ptarmigan
Evening fieldslug	Puget Oregonian	Yelm pocket gopher

As listed at http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/programs/biodiversity/species_agreement/map.html

Science in Public Policy

Each of these listing processes and their resulting policies will be science driven.

Will that science be complete, fully accurate, and independently reviewed?

Clearly articulated scientific integrity and peer review statutes will provide the tools the regulated community needs.

Questions

Getting in Touch

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www.gaelwolf.com