



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Washington, D.C. 20240

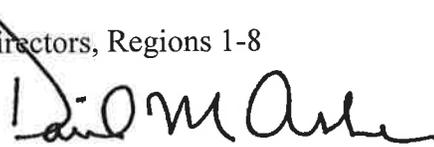


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MAR 16 2016

Memorandum

To: Regional Directors, Regions 1-8

From: Director 

Subject: Long-Term Listing Transformation and Five Guiding Principles of the Unified Listing Team

As you are aware, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) Ecological Services leadership team has been considering options for transforming the national listing program for several years. At the Directorate conference call on December 2, 2015, we discussed and endorsed their recommendations for long-term listing transformation. This memo serves to capture our collective decision to create and implement a Unified Listing Team (ULT) approach, which will consolidate policy-level review by Regional and Headquarters technical staff into one process and is designed to address unequal workload between regions by sharing capacity across the program as a whole.

The five guiding principles of the ULT that the Service will implement fully in FY2017 include the following:

1. The ULT will create a prioritized National Work Plan of all listing actions using a prioritization process upon which we all agree. The prioritization process will allow us to use information from States and other partners when setting our priorities. A draft prioritization methodology for 12-month findings published in the Federal Register on January 15, 2016, and is expected to be finalized in June 2016.
2. The ULT will work on listing actions in priority order according to the National Work Plan, while being sensitive not to overload any one Region or field office. We recognize that to implement a work plan based on our prioritization system, biologists on the ULT may work on actions from any Region of origin.
3. In our listing processes, we will distinguish the scientific analysis of the species' status from the application of the appropriate policy to this status (i.e., decision-making). This separation will create a more streamlined, transparent, and consistent listing process while ensuring that decision-making occurs at the appropriate level.

4. The listing program will use a standardized approach outlined in the Species Status Assessment (SSA) Framework for assessing the biological status of a species as it moves through the Endangered Species Act lifecycle—from proposed rule, to recovery planning, to Sections 7 and 10, to delisting. This approach will be flexible to tailor the amount of effort to what makes sense for the biological complexity of the species or suite of species at issue.
5. The ULT will complete listing actions following the development and approval process outlined in the flow chart in the transformation white paper or other subsequent guidance materials.

Thank you for your continued commitment to improving the national listing program and implementing the long-term transformation goals. If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Gary Frazer, the Service's Assistant Director for Ecological Services, at (202) 208-4646.