



National Habitat Conservation Plan Coalition

HCPS: A COOPERATIVE APPROACH

Landscape-scale Regional Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs) represent a cooperative approach to simultaneously supporting economic development and the protection of endangered species and other natural resources with off-the-shelf, replicable solutions. They provide certainty and efficient permitting for a wide range of economic and development activities, including **transportation infrastructure, oil and gas pipelines, housing and business development, water supply infrastructure/development, wind energy development, and timber harvesting.** Many regional HCPs are implemented by local governments and benefit local communities through providing open space and protecting natural resources that enhance the quality of life for residents.

PROMOTING EFFICIENCIES

Large-scale HCPs support permitting efficiencies and predictability for project proponents—including in many fast-growing metropolitan areas—and help to ensure local control of land use decisions. Some HCPs are even state-wide or multi-state in scale and **support efficient permitting of large infrastructure projects.** They can also outline clear and transparent methods for avoiding impacts on the most important places, minimizing impacts, and, when impacts cannot be avoided or minimized, providing offsets that are directed to areas that can achieve the greatest conservation outcomes. This approach helps **avoid conflicts, supports predictability for development interests, and advances better conservation outcomes than the traditional piecemeal, project-by-project approach.** Examples include the 14-state NiSource pipeline HCP and two wind energy HCPs under preparation for the Great Plains and the Midwest.

MAXIMIZING BENEFITS

Regional HCPs also support effective conservation of threatened and endangered species and their habitats by outlining landscape-level, programmatic strategies. Implementation of these conservation strategies **maximizes the conservation and recreational outcomes to regions and local communities.** These conservation outcomes support species recovery and can allow de- or down-listing of species.

Using off-the-shelf, replicable solutions, landscape-scale Regional Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs) **support local economic development and protect natural resources.**



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The National Habitat Conservation Plan Coalition, founded in 2015, consists of a variety of HCP practitioners, including managers of large-scale HCPs across the nation, as well as state agencies and various stakeholders involved in HCP planning, implementation, and policy. Its mission is to further the use, effectiveness of, and support for large-scale HCPs as local solutions to facilitate economic development and the conservation of threatened and endangered species and their habitats.

The National HCP Coalition proposes five things the Administration and Congress can do to support this goal:

1

PROMOTE HCP USE: Encourage and support the development and implementation of multi-species, landscape-scale HCPs that serve to facilitate public infrastructure and private development and conserve endangered species and the ecosystems on which they depend. The program needs to be expanded and adequately funded.

2

PRIORITIZE HCP DEVELOPMENT: Direct the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to prioritize work that relates to the development and approval of landscape-scale HCPs. Field offices need staff and funding to expedite plan completion and review, and permit issuance.

3

SUPPORT COOPERATIVE IMPLEMENTATION: Congress should increase funding for the ESA Section 6 Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation grant program to \$85 million in Fiscal Year 2021 to help fund local land acquisition and easements essential to the conservation strategies of many landscape-scale HCPs. This would partially restore the Fund to its earlier level and help satisfy the urgent need for funding for endangered species conservation efforts, particularly conservation associated with Habitat Conservation Plans.

4

LEARN FROM EXPERIENCE: Work with the National HCP Coalition to identify and advance proven strategies for effective and efficient HCP development and implementation, including monitoring and reporting outcomes.

5

ALIGN PERMITTING PROGRAMS: Direct the FWS, NMFS, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and other federal permitting agencies to provide concurrent reviews and increase alignment of the ESA, Clean Water Act, and other federal environmental laws for the purposes of advancing permitting efficiencies, achieving consistent mitigation requirements, and reducing permittee and agency staff time to prepare, review, and administer permitting and mitigation programs.



The HCP Coalition's mission is to further the use, effectiveness of, and support for large-scale HCPs as local solutions to facilitate economic development and the conservation of threatened and endangered species and their habitats.

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