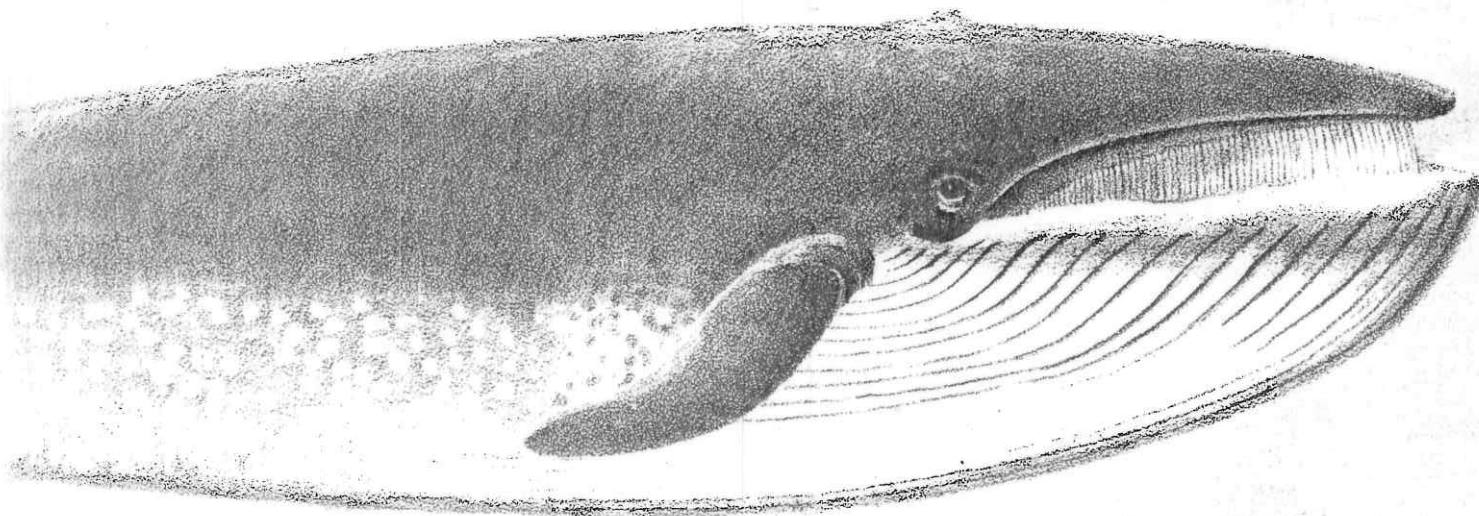


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Recovery teams aid troubled species

By Ronald M. Jurek

The bald eagle is one of nearly 300 animals or plants in the United States listed as endangered or threatened under the Federal Endangered Species Act of 1973.

Many, including the bald eagle, require special planning consideration. For some, there is an urgent need for action to prevent extinction. For others, there is a need for governmental agencies to coordinate extensive population recovery efforts.

To accomplish the necessary planning, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service have established special groups, called recovery teams, for many species. The main job of the teams is to develop recovery plans to restore populations to secure status. Team members are appointed from government agencies and the private sector. By January 1982, 69 recovery teams had been established and 46 recovery plans had been approved.

Bald eagles are federally-designated endangered or threatened in all 48 contiguous states, and recovery planning has been apportioned among teams in five geographic areas. The recovery team for the Pacific states (Washington, Oregon, California, Idaho and Nevada) was established in September 1979. The four other teams cover the northern states, the Chesapeake Bay region, the southeastern states, and the southwestern states. Bald eagles are not listed as endangered or threatened in Alaska and do not occur in Hawaii.

According to the Federal Endangered Species Act, bald eagles are threatened in Washington and Oregon and endangered in California, Idaho and Nevada. In this five-state region, over 250 pairs of bald eagles nest annually and 3,000 to

4,000 individual birds winter each year. About half of the nesting population and half of the wintering population in the Pacific planning region are found in Washington.

The Pacific team consists of eight members representing the five state wildlife departments and three federal agencies: the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forest Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The USFWS regional office in Portland administers the team. Support funds are provided under a cooperative agreement between the USFWS and the recovery team leader.

The team's major responsibilities are to develop a comprehensive recovery plan for bald eagles in the Pacific states region, including research and management recommendations; to assist in monitoring the implementation of the plan; and to update it as needed. The team does not have the authority to implement the recovery plan, or to direct recovery efforts. It is an autonomous body that does not speak for any agency. Recovery team guidelines instruct the team to stay within the biological aspects of its assignment and to avoid social, economic and political issues.

The team works closely with two ad hoc interagency coordinating groups: the California Bald Eagle Working Team and the Bald Eagle Working Team for Oregon and Washington. Both groups include members who are also recovery team members. Recovery team actions and recovery planning are coordinated with those of other recovery teams.

The recovery plan will serve as a guideline to aid government agencies in carrying out their responsibilities. Also, it will help direct research and management

efforts of agencies and organizations toward common goals. The plan will include essential background information, planning goals and objectives, recommended jobs and actions, organization and agency assignments, job priorities, funding requirements, and supporting documentation. Objectives and actions incorporated in the recovery plan will address habitat protection and enhancement, population protection and management, law enforcement, conservation education, and research and monitoring efforts.

The initial task of the recovery team has been to develop a draft report incorporating the preliminary views and recommendations of team members. This draft is now being circulated to agency biologists, researchers and others with a professional interest in bald eagle management and research. These people are being asked for their comments on biological and ecological factors affecting the species.

Later, the recovery team will submit the draft plan to the USFWS, which will transmit an agency draft report of the plan to cooperating and affected agencies for their comments on biological, political and socioeconomic concerns. The completed recovery plan will be submitted to the USFWS director for final approval.

The ultimate goal of recovery planning is to provide the conditions needed to assure that the bald eagle will no longer be endangered or threatened. The bald eagle then would be removed from the endangered and threatened listings. This planning effort will help direct and coordinate the work needed to restore the United States' bald eagle population to a secure status. #