



Delisting a Species

Section 4 of the Endangered Species Act

Delisting is the removal of species from the Federal Lists of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants.

Downlisting is the reclassification of a species from Endangered to Threatened. Delisting and downlisting actions result from successful recovery efforts. To delist a species, the Service must determine that the species is not threatened based on a number of factors, such as population size, recruitment, stability of habitat quality and quantity, and control or elimination of the threats. If some of the threats have been reduced and the population has met its recovery objectives for downlisting, we may consider changing the species status from Endangered to Threatened. Delisting species is the ultimate goal of implementing the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

Why, when, and how are species removed from the list of endangered and threatened species?

Recovery plans, developed by the Service and stakeholders for listed species, identify delisting and downlisting goals. When a species reaches its delisting goals, the Service considers removing it from the Federal Lists of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants. Likewise, when a species reaches its downlisting goals, the Service considers changing its status from Endangered to Threatened.

To delist or downlist a species, the Service follows a process similar to when we consider a species for listing under the ESA: we assess the population and its recovery achievements; we assess the existing threats; and, we seek advice from species experts in and outside of the Service. To assess the existing threats, the Service must determine that the

species is no longer threatened or endangered based on five factors:

- Is there a present or threatened destruction, modification, or curtailment of species' habitat or range?
- Is species subject to overutilization for commercial, recreational, scientific, or educational purposes?
- Is disease or predation a factor?
- Are there inadequate existing regulatory mechanisms in place outside the ESA (taking into account the efforts by the States and other organizations to protect the species or habitat)?

■ Are other natural or manmade factors affecting its continued existence?

If the Service determines that the threats have been sufficiently reduced, then we may consider delisting or downlisting the species. When delisting or downlisting a species, the Service first proposes the action in the *Federal Register*. At this time, we also seek the opinion from independent species experts, other Federal agencies, State biologists, and the public. After analyzing the comments received on the proposed rulemaking, we decide whether to complete the proposed action or maintain the species status as it is. Our final decision is announced in the

American peregrine falcon, delisted in 1999, because of recovery.
Craig Koppie, USFWS



Federal Register. The comments received and our response to them are addressed in the final rule.

What happens after a species is delisted?

If delisted due to recovery, the ESA requires the Service, in cooperation with the States, to monitor the species for a minimum of five years in order to assess each species' ability to sustain itself without the ESA's protective measures. The draft post-delisting monitoring strategy is generally available at the time the proposal for delisting is published in the *Federal Register*. We seek peer review and public comment of this document. Once the final delisting monitoring plan is approved, it is put into action. If, within the designated monitoring period, threats to the species change or unforeseen events change the stability of the population, then the species may be relisted or the monitoring period extended.

Why are species delisted?

Species are taken off the endangered and threatened species list (i.e., delisted) for a variety of reasons: recovery, extinction, new evidence of additional populations, and other reasons. Over the years, the Service has delisted few species, because we have focused our attention and resources on saving more imperiled species. For more information about species that have been delisted or downlisted, please see our web site at <http://endangered.fws.gov/wildlife.html>.

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Steps in the Delisting and Downlisting Process

