



South Puget Sound Mazama Pocket Gopher (*Thomomys mazama**) | 2012 Action Plan Summary

* Only four (Olympia, Tenino, Yelm, and Roy) of the nine subspecies of *Thomomys mazama* are proposed for listing.

The Mazama pocket gopher is a medium sized burrowing rodent that is endemic to western Washington, western Oregon and northern California. Gophers tunnel underground, aerating the soil and creating mounds that are well suited to the growth of native wildflowers. Of the nine subspecies, four (Olympia, Tenino, Yelm, and Roy) are found in prairies in south Puget Sound, the region of emphasis for this working group. Due to declining and fragmented prairie habitat in the region, the population of these four subspecies is considered at risk. The US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has published a proposed rule to list the four south Puget Sound subspecies as Threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

Conservation Status of the Mazama Pocket Gopher



State of WA
Threatened



Federal
Threatened*

* Proposed

CPOP and the Species-Specific Working Group

The Cascadia Prairie-Oak Partnership (CPOP) is an ecoregional group that brings together conservation focused professionals that represent state, federal and local government, military, conservation groups and other entities interested in prairie-oak conservation. CPOP was created to increase coordination between these groups in order to promote conservation action, leverage funding, and expand recovery efforts. The Mazama pocket gopher working group first convened in 2010 and meets annually to discuss and prioritize recovery actions.



What is an Action Plan and what is its purpose?

Each CPOP working group maintains an Action Plan, a document that lists the 'next best tasks' that can be taken to improve the status of the species and ranks the highest priority actions. Each year at the annual meeting the list is updated to reflect completed work, new opportunities and changes in urgency. The Action Plan is meant to encourage dialogue and consensus among the group as well as to inform entities that work with conservation policies and funding, such as US Fish and Wildlife Service, as to what actions are priorities to support the recovery of the Mazama pocket gopher.

2012 Action Plan Ranked Priorities

Rank	Action to be taken
# 1	Protect occupied habitat via land purchase, easements, regulation, voluntary conservation, etc.
# 2	Create a long term strategy to address development pressure (e.g. mitigation bank, HCP)
# 3	Describe subspecific taxonomy of Washington populations based on DNA, including mapping boundaries of distinct populations
# 4	Develop and implement management agreements (e.g. ESMP, management plan)
# 5	Control pest plants at occupied sites (e.g. trees, shrubs, pasture grasses)
# 6	Identify important habitat features (e.g. key food plants, favorable vegetation structure)
# 7	Explicitly include gophers in incentive programs (e.g. FWS Partners Program)
# 8	Refine and update gopher distribution
# 9	Determine what the sustainable population size is relative to habitat patch size and quality
# 10	Maintain active working group, information sharing, and collaborative action
# 11	Evaluate efficacy and feasibility of translocating gophers
# 12	Improve public perception of gophers through positive PR & other means
# 13	Determine and test cost effective and efficient monitoring protocol at multiple levels of protection
# 14	Enhance implementation of regulatory process for local permitting offices, consultants and DFW
# 15	Identify sites that are suitable for augmentation or reintroduction

Threats

Although progress has been made, threats such as development and habitat degradation are still very real for the Mazama pocket gopher. Continued efforts will be necessary to ensure their recovery and survival.



Recently Completed Actions

Since the first Action Plan was created in 2010, the following notable tasks have been completed or have made substantial progress:

- An integrated strategy to remove invasive plants is being implemented on multiple protected lands in the South Sound.
- Translocation methods have been researched and tested, resulting in two translocations, both of which show the species persisting.
- Genetic studies have been funded and research has begun.
- A study has been initiated to better understand movement of gophers and the level of dispersal that occurs.
- An expanded survey was conducted over multiple sites.
- Positive outreach to the community and landowners has increased.
 - FWS created and distributed a fact card for landowners that explains the differences between gophers and moles.
 - Thurston County produced videos to correct misunderstandings about local regulations that affect prairie landowners.
- Thurston County initiated a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), to guide development and conservation in the County.