

2015-2016 Mazama Pocket Gopher Action Plan

The purpose of this action plan is to identify the next-best conservation actions that can be conducted over the next 3-5 years to support MPG recovery.

Category	Ref. #	Task Synopsis (*=new item)	Rank	Status and Implementing Party (Options: Ongoing, In Progress, Planned, or No Action Yet)
1. Survey and Monitoring	1.1	1. Develop a comprehensive survey/monitoring scheme to address probability of occurrence, assess site occupancy, and monitor trends at multiple scales.	3	<i>In Progress</i> WDFW, USFWS, Thurston Co., JBLM, CNLM
	1.1.a	a. Identify the type, number and timing of surveys required to determine occupancy, including refining process to determine area occupied.		<i>In Progress</i> WDFW, FWS
	1.1.b	b. Identify the type, number and timing of surveys required to determine population numbers and/or trends.		<i>In Progress</i> WDFW
	1.2	2. Implement survey/monitoring scheme.		
	1.2.b	a. Assess population numbers and/or trends.		
	1.3	3. Refine and update gopher distribution maps. Utilize WDFW Species Occurrence Database (WSDM).		<i>Ongoing</i> (WDFW), USFWS, Thurston Co. JBLM, CNLM
2. Protect Existing Populations and Habitat	2.1	1. Protect occupied habitat via land purchase, easements, voluntary conservation, etc.	1	
	2.1.a	a. Develop and implement management agreements and/or plans (e.g. ESMP, Mgmt. Plan, Farm Bill programs, WA state recovery plan, Olympia Airport).		<i>In Progress</i> JBLM, WDFW, CNLM, FWS, Thurston Co, Port of Olympia, NRCS
	2.1.b	b. Develop opportunities to explicitly implement gopher protection through incentive programs and regulatory assistance (e.g. NRCS Farm Bill programs, county conservation districts).		<i>Ongoing</i> NRCS
	2.1.c	c. Pursue opportunities within existing programs to purchase land (e.g. West Rocky Prairie via WWRP; ACUB; Section 6).		<i>Ongoing</i> South Sound Partners
	2.1.d	d. Explicitly include gophers/prairie habitat in incentive programs that support habitat protection, (e.g. ACEP).		<i>Ongoing</i> NRCS
	2.1.e	e. Ensure explicit gopher protections are included in agriculture easements and develop mechanism and resources to ensure protections are implemented. *	6	
	2.2	2. Protect occupied habitat via regulation.		
	2.2.a	a. Create long-term strategy to address development pressure via regulation (e.g. mitigation bank, interim permitting strategy, HCPs).	2	<i>In Progress</i> Thurston County, FWS, WDFW, CNLM, Tumwater
	2.2.b	b. Improve conservation effectiveness and implementation of regulatory process for local permitting offices, consultants and WDFW.		<i>Ongoing</i> USFWS, WDFW, Thurston Co.
	2.2.c	c. Assess effectiveness of habitat protection areas for gopher conservation (e.g., set-aside, mitigation bank).	12	<i>Ongoing</i> WDFW
	2.2.c.i	i. Develop conservation performance criteria and compliance monitoring measures for habitat protection areas established through HCP and other programs		<i>In Progress</i> CNLM, USFWS, Thurston Co. <i>Planned</i> WDFW
2.3	3. Identify priority conservation areas for MPG (e.g. Reserve Design).		<i>Ongoing</i> USFWS, Thurston Co, WDFW	
2.4	4. Develop a recovery plan with measurable objectives. *		<i>Planned</i> USFWS and partners	
2.5	5. Implement debit/credit scheme under FWS/DOD ACUB Memorandum of Understanding. *		<i>In Progress</i> USFWS and JBLM	
3. Manage, Enhance, and Maintain Habitat	3.1	1. Implement habitat restoration, maintenance and enhancement.	4	<i>Ongoing</i>
	3.1.a	a. Assess site-specific habitat conditions (e.g. vegetation composition and structure, soil, dispersal barriers, predation pressure).		
	3.1.b	b. Control pest plants and increase habitat quality at occupied sites (e.g. trees, shrubs, pasture grasses).		
	3.1.c	c. Expand occupied habitat through restoration (e.g. woody cover removal, increase forb cover, access control).		
	3.2	2. Develop and implement spatially-explicit plans to restore, enhance, maintain habitat.	9	
	3.2.a	a. Identify compatible/incompatible land uses (e.g. recreation, military training, grazing, prescribed fire, dispersal barriers) and redirect incompatible land use at high priority sites (e.g. JBLM, Olympia airport, wildlife areas).		
	3.2.b	b. Explicitly include gophers in incentive programs that support habitat management (e.g. FWS Partners Program, NRCS Stewardship Programs/EQIP).		<i>Ongoing</i> FWS, NRCS
	3.3	3. Identify important habitat and landscape features.	10	
	3.3.a	a. Identify vegetation structure and functional group composition favorable to Mazama pocket gophers.		
	3.3.b	b. Identify the level and type of disturbance (e.g. fire) beneficial to gophers and/or their habitat (e.g., source, frequency, intensity, duration, and spatial extent).		<i>In Progress</i> WDFW, JBLM, CNLM
3.3.c	c. Determine relationship between gopher occurrence and soil type and structure.	11	<i>Planned</i> USFWS, Thurston Co.	
3.3.d	d. Identify landscape features (e.g. roads, corridors) that impact gopher dispersal and distribution.*			
3.4	4. Monitor and assess habitat objectives and gopher response to restoration actions.*			
4. Increase Size & # of Populations	4.1	1. Evaluate the range-wide need to increase numbers of populations. If needed, identify if this should be done through translocation or by increasing sizes of existing populations through habitat manipulations.		
	4.2	2. Identify and evaluate the tools to maximize conservation value on protected lands and minimize loss (e.g. corridor creation, translocation, habitat expansion).		
5. Demographics & Genetics	5.1	1. Conduct demographic and genetic studies.		
	5.1.a	a. Evaluate genetic diversity among existing populations.		<i>In Progress</i> WDFW
	5.1.b	b. Use genetic information to inform management units and/or focal areas.	5	
5.1.c	c. Determine population vital rates (e.g., survival, reproduction, etc.) and factors that might affect those rates to inform determination of sustainable population size relative to habitat patch size and quality.	7		
6. Communications and Coordination	6.1	1. Develop and implement a regional, cooperative communications strategy for multiple audiences.	8	<i>In Progress</i> (see below)
	6.1.a	a. Conduct direct outreach to landowners of existing populations.		<i>In Progress</i> WDFW, Thurston Co., CNLM, Conservation Dist.
	6.1.b	b. Improve public perception and understanding of gophers and gopher-related conservation actions through positive PR & other means.		<i>In Progress</i> SPS Communications Partnership
	6.1.c	c. Educate public on regulatory and incentive programs (e.g., ESA, CAO, HCP, Farm Bill, Futures).		<i>Ongoing</i> Thurston Co., NRCS, USFWS
	6.1.d	d. Update guidance for land managers and landowners (e.g. PHS management recommendations).		<i>Planned</i> WDFW
	6.1.e	e. Update, clarify, and explicitly link private, federal, county and state online information (i.e. SouthSoundPrairies.org).		<i>Ongoing</i> CNLM and SPS Communications Partnership
	6.2	2. Maintain active working group, information sharing, and collaborative action.	13	<i>Ongoing</i> CNLM, Partners
6.3	3. Develop/utilize a single coordinated database for MPG data. *		<i>Ongoing</i> WDFW and partners	