

South Puget Sound Mazama Pocket Gopher (Thomomys mazama*) | 2015-2016 Action Plan Summary

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

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. In April 2014, the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) designated four south Puget Sound subspecies as Threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

CPOP

Conservation Status of the Mazama Pocket Gopher



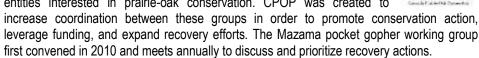


State of WA Threatened

Federal Threatened

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



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.

Action Plan Ranked Priorities

Rank Action to be taken

- Protect occupied habitat via land purchase, easements, regulation, voluntary conservation, etc.,
- with an emphasis on ensuring that explicit gopher protections are included in agricultural easements and are implemented (sub-heading ranked #6).
- Protect occupied habitat via regulation, with an emphasis on creating long-term strategy to address development pressure and on assessing effectiveness of habitat protection areas for gopher conservation (sub-heading ranked #12).
- Develop a comprehensive survey/monitoring scheme to address probability of occurrence, assess site occupancy, and monitor trends at multiple scales.
- Implement habitat restoration, maintenance and enhancement.
 - Conduct demographic and genetic studies, with an emphasis on using genetic information to
- inform management units and/or focal areas and on determining population vital rates and factors that might affect those rates (sub-heading ranked #7).
- # 8 Develop and implement a regional, cooperative communications strategy for multiple audiences.
- # 9 Develop and implement spatially-explicit plans to restore, enhance, and maintain habitat.
- Identify important habitat and landscape features, with an emphasis on determining the relationship between gopher occurrence and soil type and structure (sub-heading ranked #11).
- Maintain active working group, information sharing, and collaborative action.

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.
- Results from a study to better understand movement of gophers and the level of dispersal that occurs has been published.
- 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.
 - A project has begun to provide targeted outreach to the community.
- Thurston County initiated a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) to guide development and conservation in the County.

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.



This document was created by the Center for Natural Lands Management on behalf of the Mazama Pocket Gopher Working Group. Email ekim@cnlm.org for info. Updated 11/5/15.

