



Public Lands Play Vital Role in Conserving Common and Imperiled Species

A history of ecosystem-based wildlife management on National Forests. In 1982, the Reagan Administration enacted a simple approach to managing wildlife on National Forests. It promulgated regulations requiring the Forest Service to maintain viable populations of all naturally occurring wildlife species in each National Forest. About 39 percent of all endangered species occur on America's over 155 million National Forest acres, along with countless other more common plants and animals. The regulations, known as the "Population Viability Rule," helped healthy populations of wildlife species, including game species, to thrive, and keep more sensitive species off of the endangered species list in the first place.

Unfortunately, in 2004, the Bush Administration finalized new forest management regulations that repealed the Population Viability Rule, largely at the urging of the logging industry and over the objections of conservation groups, sportsmen, and outdoor businesses.

Common sense conservation on all public lands. With more controversy than ever about protecting endangered species, and emerging controversies surrounding oil and gas development, logging and fuels reduction, the effects of climate change on wildlife, and massive Western population growth, the Population Viability Rule should be reinstated, but

with slight modifications to modernize the requirement.

Lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) harbor a large number of common and imperiled species, just like National Forests, but the BLM has never operated under any kind of wildlife



management standard similar to the Population Viability Rule. Conversely, National Parks have long been recognized as the leader in ecosystem-based wildlife conservation, but face increasing threats from outside their borders, mostly due to resource extraction activities on adjacent National Forests, BLM units, and private lands.

Defenders advocates a new wildlife conservation standard for BLM lands similar to the Population Viability Rule, and coordinated wildlife management across federal and state jurisdictions to conserve species and ecosystems across the landscape.