**Survey of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

**Habitat Conservation Bank Managers**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the Department of the Interior’s Office of Policy Analysis are undertaking an analysis of the USFWS habitat conservation banking program. As part of this analysis, we are surveying conservation bank sponsors and managers to obtain information on experiences with and opinions of various aspects of the conservation banking program. Your responses as a conservation bank manager are critical to our efforts. Responses to the survey are anonymous and will be reported in aggregate form.

If you have any questions or have trouble completing the survey, please contact Sarah Cline, DOI Office of Policy Analysis, at 202-208-6018 or sarah\_cline@ios.doi.gov.

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This survey is authorized by the Endangered Species Act. It will provide information necessary for us to understand the current performance of the conservation banking program and to identify areas where the program can be improved. Your response is voluntary. We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to an information collection unless it displays a currently valid Office of Management and Budget (OMB) control number. We estimate that it will take conservation bank managers about 15 minutes to complete this survey, including time to gather information, read instructions, and complete the survey. You may send comments on any aspect of this information collection to the Information Collection Clearance Officer, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 5275 Leesburg Pike, (Mail Stop BPHC), Falls Church, VA 22041

The questions in this survey pertain to your **direct professional** experiences with habitat conservation banking, *not* wetlands or stream mitigation banking. Please answer the following questions based solely on your experience with habitat conservation banks administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or jointly by the USFWS and another agency.

1. Are you involved with the development and/or management of individual conservation banks (preparing and submitting banking documents, land management, etc.)?
   1. Yes
   2. No
2. What is your role in conservation banking? (Please choose all that apply)
3. Bank Sponsor
4. Landowner
5. Bank Manager
6. Other: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
7. How many years have you been involved in conservation banking?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. How many banks have you helped develop?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Have you participated in any conservation banking training (as an instructor or participant)? (Please select all that apply)
2. Yes – Instructor
3. Yes – Participant
4. No
5. How familiar are you with 2003 USFWS “[Guidance for the Establishment, Use, and Operation of Conservation Banks](http://www.fws.gov/endangered/esa-library/pdf/Conservation_Banking_Guidance.pdf)”? (Please select one answer below)
6. Very familiar
7. Somewhat familiar
8. Unfamiliar
9. Currently, no regulations exist to guide the development of conservation banks. Do you feel that changes to the current guidance (mentioned in Question 6) or the development of new conservation banking regulations are needed? (Please select one answer below)
   1. Yes – Changes to current guidance
   2. Yes – Development of new regulations
   3. Yes – Both changes to guidance and development of new regulations
   4. No
   5. No opinion
10. In your opinion, what is the perception of conservation banks as a conservation tool for each of the different groups listed below? (Please select one response for each item below)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Very negative | Somewhat negative | Neutral | Somewhat positive | Very positive | Don’t know/No opinion | List Field/Regional Office |
| USFWS - Field office |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| USFWS - Regional office |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| USFWS - National office |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Other Federal agencies |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| State agencies |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Local government |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Local Non-Governmental Organizations |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Energy, mining & related industries |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Manufacturing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Shipping/transportation industries |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Real estate developers |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Private landowners |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

1. Based on your experience, how likely is each of the following factors to lengthen the USFWS review time for banking agreements? (Please select one response for each item below)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Extremely unlikely | Unlikely | Neutral | Likely | Extremely likely | Don’t know/No Opinion |
| Insufficient USFWS staffing |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Unsupportive USFWS management |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| USFWS staff not adequately trained |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Government legal review and approval |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Inexperienced bankers |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Long or complex banking agreements |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Lack of standardized documents/templates |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Determination of credits |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Coordination with other Federal, State, or local agencies |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Lack of defined timeline |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Other: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |  |  |  |  |  |  |

1. In your opinion, how important are each of the following factors in hindering conservation bank creation? (Please select one response for each item below)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Not at all important | Somewhat important | Important | Very important | Don’t know/No opinion |
| Unsuitability of species for banking |  |  |  |  |  |
| Weak demand for credits |  |  |  |  |  |
| Lack of start-up funding |  |  |  |  |  |
| Landowners not willing to sell land or easement |  |  |  |  |  |
| Economic uncertainty/risk |  |  |  |  |  |
| Other mitigation options substitute for banking |  |  |  |  |  |
| Lack of USFWS support |  |  |  |  |  |
| Lack of USFWS Field Office experience |  |  |  |  |  |
| Lack of clear deadlines/timelines for USFWS |  |  |  |  |  |
| Delayed USFWS response |  |  |  |  |  |
| Lack of ESA enforcement |  |  |  |  |  |
| Lack of species and habitat data |  |  |  |  |  |
| Other: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |  |  |  |  |  |

1. To what extent do you agree that each of the following changes to the FWS conservation banking program would make conservation bank creation easier? (Please select one response for each item below)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree | Don’t know/No opinion |
| Known timeline after complete submission |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Expressed preference by USFWS for advance compensatory mitigation |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Equivalent standards for all types of compensatory mitigation |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Policy preference for conservation banking above other compensatory mitigation options |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Approved conservation banking document templates in use in all regions |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Formal conservation banking regulations |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Other: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |  |  |  |  |  |  |

1. In your opinion, to what extent are the following factors good measures of conservation bank success for your company, for species and for credit purchasers? (Please select one response for each item below)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Very Poor Measure | Poor Measure | Neutral | Good Measure | Very Good Measure | Don’t know |
| Meeting criteria for recovery plan/Accomplishing conservation goals |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Maintaining a stable population/growing the species |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Linking existing conservation/natural areas |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Increasing the number of acres of “preserved” habitat |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Increasing the number of acres of critical habitat secured |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Preserving ecologically valuable private lands |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Minimizing costs to project proponents |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Number of credit sales |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Conservation bank profitability |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Reinvestment of capital in additional banks |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Other:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |  |  |  |  |  |  |

1. In your opinion, to what extent is each of the following factors a good measure of conservation bank ecological performance? (Please select one response for each item below)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Very Poor Measure | Poor Measure | Neutral | Good Measure | Very Good Measure | Don’t know/No opinion |
| Index of biological integrity |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Indicator species number and diversity |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Habitat conditions |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Number of individuals of the species |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Health of ecosystem |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Species threats addressed |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Other: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |  |  |  |  |  |  |

1. How would you rate the availability of species and habitat data in your region(s)? (Please answer for each region in which you work)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Region | Very poor | Poor | Fair | Good | Very good | Don’t know/No opinion |
| 1  (Pacific) |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2  (Southwest) |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3  (Great Lakes-Big Rivers) |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4  (Southeast) |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5  (Northeast) |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 6  (Mountain-Prairie) |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 7  (Alaska) |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 8  (California & Nevada) |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Region 1: ID, OR, WA, HI, Pacific Islands; Region 2: AZ, NM, OK, TX; Region 3: IL, IN, IA, MI, MO, MN, OH, WI; Region 4: AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, PR/VI, SC, TN; Region 5: CT, DE, ME, MD, MA, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT, VA, WV; Region 6: CO, KS, MT, ND, NE, SD, UT, WY; Region 7: AK; Region 8: CA, NV | | | | | | |

1. In your opinion, how important are the following factors in impeding conservation bank operations? (Please select one response for each item below)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Not at all important | Somewhat important | Important | Very important | Don’t know/No opinion |
| USFWS reticence to publicize availability of conservation banking |  |  |  |  |  |
| HCPs without conservation banking option |  |  |  |  |  |
| State or local government agencies unwilling to accept use of conservation banks |  |  |  |  |  |
| Other:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |  |  |  |  |  |

**Wetlands Mitigation Banking**

The questions in this section pertain to your experiences with wetlands and stream mitigation banking only, not habitat conservation banking. Please answer the following questions based solely on your **direct professional** experience with wetlands and/or stream mitigation banking only.

1. How familiar are you with wetlands mitigation banking? (Please select one answer below)
2. Very familiar
3. Somewhat familiar
4. Unfamiliar

*If you answered c, skip to Question 19*

1. In your view, how does conservation banking compare with wetlands mitigation banking in the following areas? (Please select one response for each item below)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Worse | About the Same | Better | Don’t know |
| Length of time required for review/approval of conservation banks |  |  |  |  |
| Ease of application process for conservation banks |  |  |  |  |
| Developer’s cost to establish conservation banks |  |  |  |  |
| Ease of determining the total number of available credits for conservation banks |  |  |  |  |
| Monitoring requirements – timing, cost, complexity for conservation banks |  |  |  |  |
| Ecological performance of conservation banks |  |  |  |  |
| Ability to measure ecological performance of conservation banks |  |  |  |  |
| Government administrative costs of conservation banks (including oversight) |  |  |  |  |

1. How familiar are you with the [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Final Rule (2008)](http://www.usace.army.mil/portals/2/docs/civilworks/regulatory/final_mitig_rule.pdf) related to wetlands mitigation banking? (Please select one answer below)
2. Very familiar
3. Somewhat familiar
4. Unfamiliar.
5. Do you think any of these elements in the [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Final Rule (2008)](http://www.usace.army.mil/portals/2/docs/civilworks/regulatory/final_mitig_rule.pdf) related to wetlands mitigation banking should be considered for addition to USFWS' conservation banking guidance? (Please select one response for each item below)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Add | Already Exists | Don’t Add | No opinion |
| Establish equivalent standards for all mitigation mechanisms |  |  |  |  |
| Establish timelines for agency review of bank proposals and instruments |  |  |  |  |
| Require short-term financial assurances that restoration would be completed as planned (usually through bonds, letters of credits, or escrow funds) |  |  |  |  |
| Establish an explicit preference for bank credits (when available) over other forms of mitigation |  |  |  |  |
| Require the establishment of ‘service areas’ for banks and in-lieu fee programs. Service areas are defined as the geographic area within which impacts can be mitigated at a specific bank or in-lieu fee program |  |  |  |  |
| Other: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |  |  |  |  |

1. Is there anything else you would like to add that was not addressed in the questions above?

**Thank You!**

Thank you for participating in our survey! Your responses are very valuable for our analysis of the USFWS conservation banking program.

Please click "Done" to submit your responses.

If you have any questions or comments about the survey, please contact Sarah Cline at the DOI Office of Policy Analysis: [sarah\_cline@ios.doi.gov](mailto:sarah_cline@ios.doi.gov), phone: 202-208-6018.