

## CONSERVATION UNDER THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT: EXPENDITURES VERSUS RECOVERY PRIORITIES <sup>TWS</sup>

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Budget constraints require the USDI Fish and Wildlife Service to prioritize species for recovery spending. Each listed species is ranked according to the degree of threat it faces, recovery potential, and taxonomic distinctness. We analyzed the most recent state and federal government expenditures for recovery of threatened and endangered terrestrial vertebrates ( $n = 179$  species) to determine if the priority system was being followed.

Although recovery spending correlated with priority rank, priority rank explained <4 percent of the variation in spending. Species with high recovery potential, recovery programs that conflict with economic development, and wide distributions received the most funding and relatively more funding than their priority ranks dictated. Degree of threat and taxonomic distinctness did not affect the allocation of recovery spending. Island species received significantly less funding than expected based on priority rank compared to wide ranging mainland species. To improve the relationship between recovery spending on threatened and endangered species and priority rank, we believe significant changes are necessary within the private sector (less litigation, special interest lobbying), U.S. Congress (reduced earmarking, increased budget), and the USDI Fish and Wildlife Service (restructuring of regional offices, increased accountability).