

****Long-term Assessment of the Change in Attitudes Towards and Knowledge of Black-Footed Ferrets and Black-Tailed Prairie Dogs in Montana**

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The human component in endangered species conservation has the potential to significantly limit the ability to achieve recovery of these species globally. Across the Great Plains there have been significant declines in several grassland obligate species, including black-tailed prairie dogs (*Cynomys ludovicianus*) and the Critically Endangered black-footed ferret (*Mustela nigripes*). Social surveys conducted in Montana, USA 27 years ago immediately prior to the reintroduction of black-footed ferrets described widely differing attitudes and knowledge among different stakeholder groups - with most local and state residents being opposed to conservation and recovery of this keystone species and endangered carnivore. We conducted a mail survey replicating the methods of a 1993 study to assess current attitudes and knowledge towards prairie dogs and black-footed ferrets among five stakeholder groups (local and statewide ranchers, urban and local residents, and members of conservation organizations). Our results demonstrate that despite concerted outreach efforts and a general rise in knowledge about black-footed ferrets and prairie dogs across stakeholder groups, similar differences in attitudes persisted among stakeholder groups over time, where local stakeholders adjacent to recovery sites maintained most negative attitudes. We also observed that local stakeholders demonstrated a significantly shorter (< 10 years) threshold for giving up on restoring an endangered species should recovery goals not be met. Given the reliance on local public support for conserving these species, and other endangered species globally, our findings highlight the importance of continually reassessing stakeholder attitudes and knowledge over time to identify future opportunities and hurdles to endangered species restoration.