

---

## RESTORING WILDLIFE DIVERSITY AT LANDSCAPE SCALES

Jonathan Hafler, Ecosystem Management Research Institute, Seeley Lake, MT  
Carolyn Mehl, Ecosystem Management Research Institute, Seeley Lake, MT

Maintaining and restoring biodiversity remains one of the most challenging objectives for natural resource managers. Wildlife biologists have primary responsibility for meeting these objectives. In the U.S., the Endangered Species Act has encouraged a species by species approach to biodiversity conservation. While managing listed species is an essential component of wildlife management, this is a reactive approach that kicks in only when a species is already on a downward spiral. Proactive planning and actions are needed to keep species from reaching such critical levels. This requires comprehensive and cohesive strategies for habitat diversity that will maintain sustainable populations of all species. Ecosystem-based approaches are a cornerstone to such strategies. Examples of applications of such approaches are presented including on-going ecosystem-based initiatives for grassland conservation using prairie grouse as flagship species and planning for future forest conditions using the ecological sustainability components of the USFS Forest Planning Rule. These approaches can provide the habitat diversity required to maintain biodiversity including conditions for species for which we have little information. Suggestions will be presented on how we can build support for these approaches including how we can encourage engagement of multiple agencies, NGO's, industries, and landowners in implementing needed conservation actions.