

# Pygmy Rabbit Periodic Status Review and Recommendation

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# Draft Periodic Status Review: Process & Timeline

## Listing Process Guided by WAC 220-610-110

- November 2023: 1 year in advance request for information.
- May 2024: 90-day public comment period on Draft Periodic Status Review.
- October 2024: PSR finalized and published on the website.
- Listing "...solely on the basis of the biological status of the species being considered, based on the preponderance of scientific data available."
- Endangered species is "... seriously threatened with extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range within the state."
- Periodic Status Reviews are reviews of the status of the species for classification decisions and not intended to be management documents.



**Recommendation:  
RETAIN ENDANGERED STATUS:**

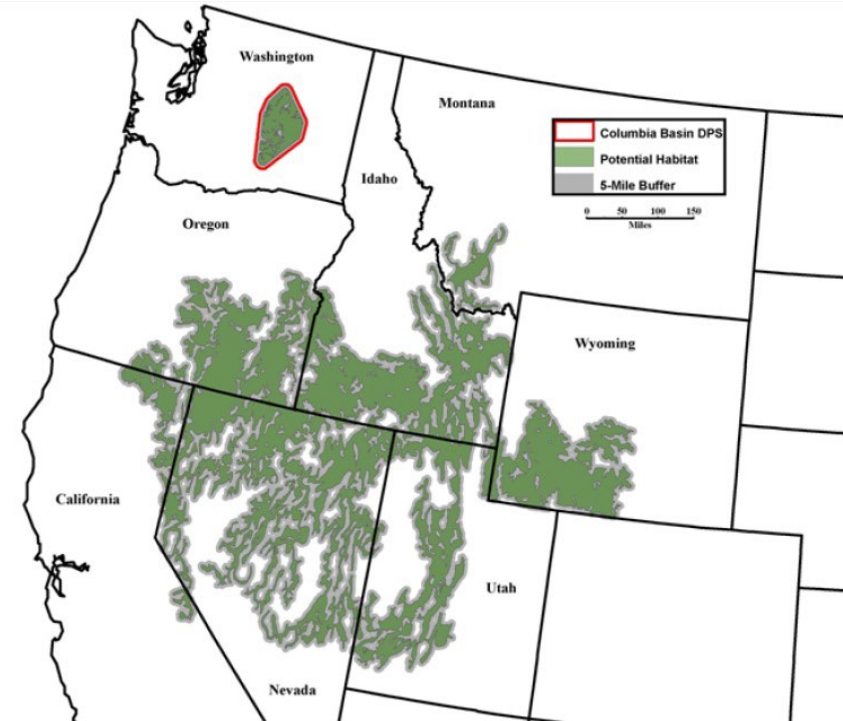
# Description and Legal Status

State: Threatened 1990, Endangered 1993

Federal: Columbia Basin DPS Endangered 2001



*Brachylagus idahoensis*



# Natural History: sagebrush obligate

Diet: big sagebrush year-round; perennial grasses seasonally.

Cover: tall, dense stands big sagebrush; deep sandy-loam soils.



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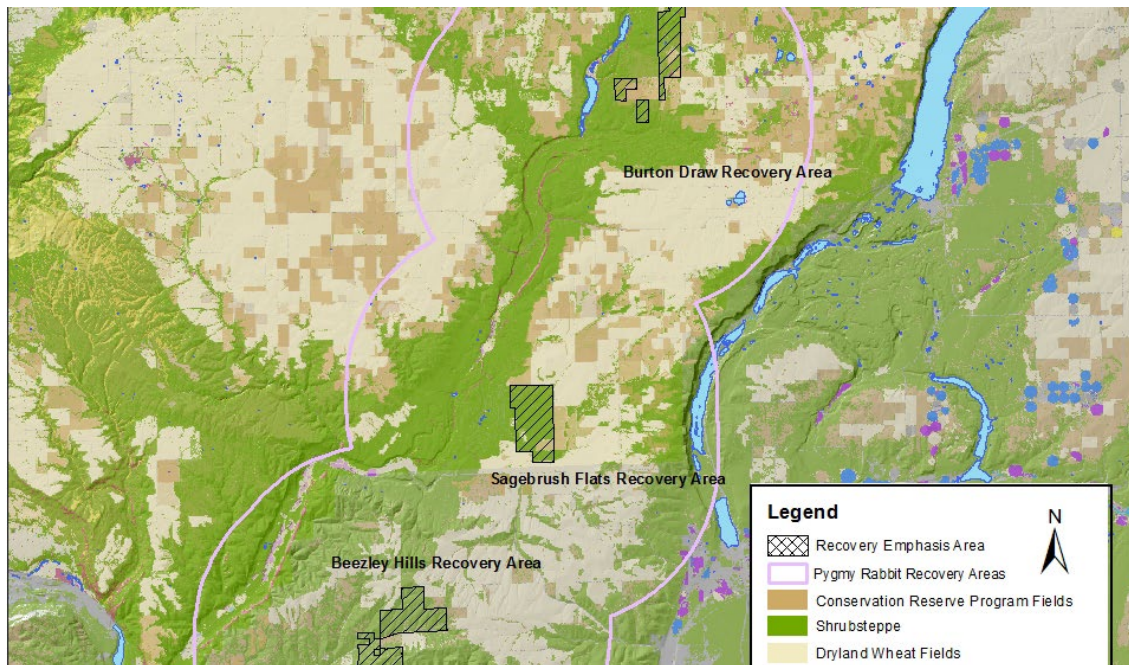
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# Historical Decline and Habitat Loss

Habitat loss due to conversion of deep soil shrubsteppe to farmland.  
Habitat degradation of remaining shrubsteppe.



Jon Gallie



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# Population Decline in Washington

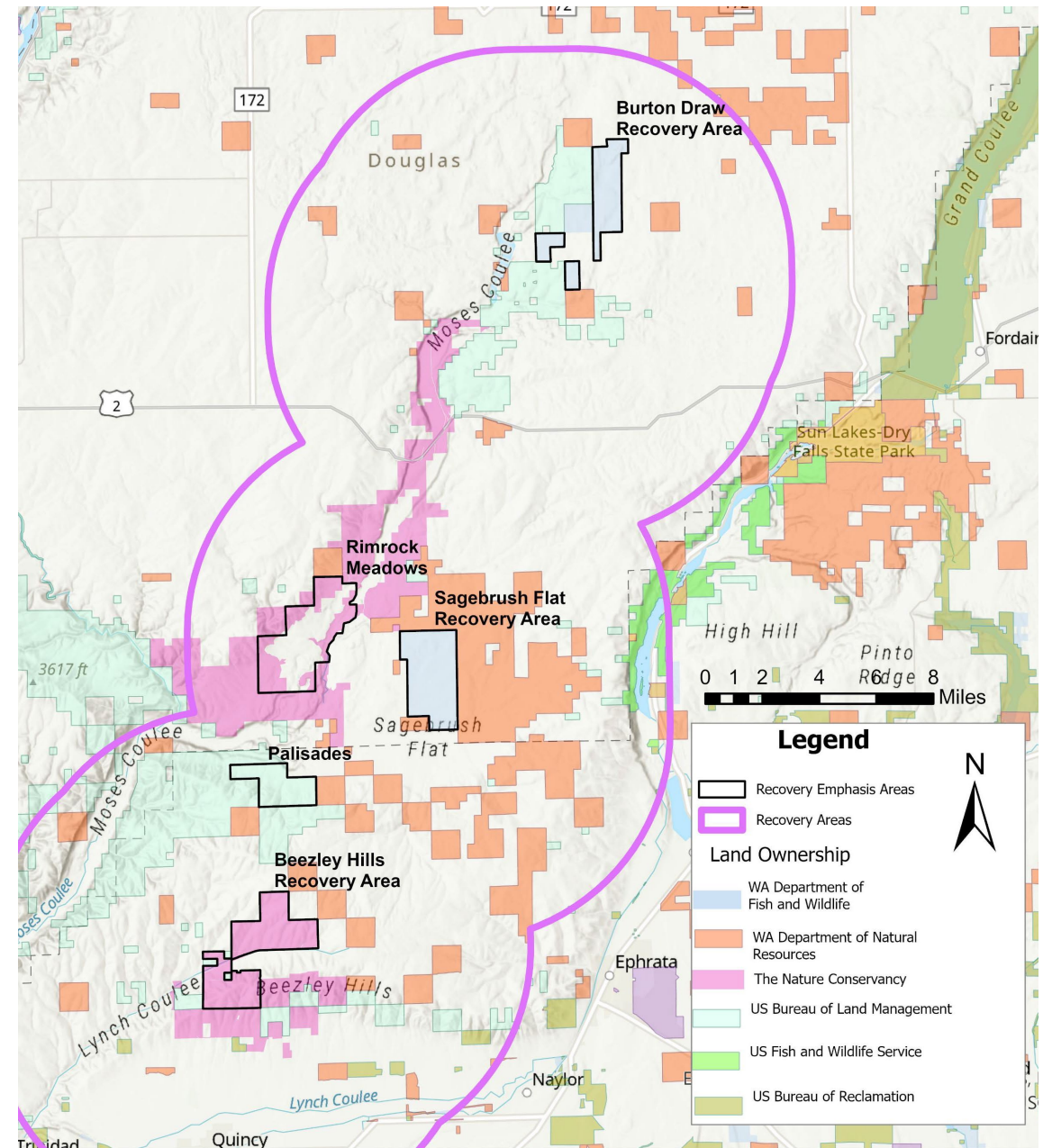
- 1995: pygmy rabbits present at only 5 sites in Douglas County.
- 2001: 5 of 6 occupied sites no longer occupied; SBF only remaining occupied site.
- 2001: 16 pygmy rabbits captured from wild and brought into captivity.
- 2002-2011: captive breeding program.
- 2011: transition from captive breeding to breeding enclosures in shrubsteppe and releases into wild.



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# Pygmy Rabbit Recovery Areas

- Burton Draw
- Sagebrush Flat
- Beezley Hills





# Translocations: bolster genetic diversity

2011-2013: 109 rabbits translocated from OR, NV, UT, WY

2020: 26 rabbits translocated from ID, NV.



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Hannah Letinich

# Monitoring

Noninvasive Genetic Sampling: active burrows, fecal DNA

Winter and Summer: walking transect surveys



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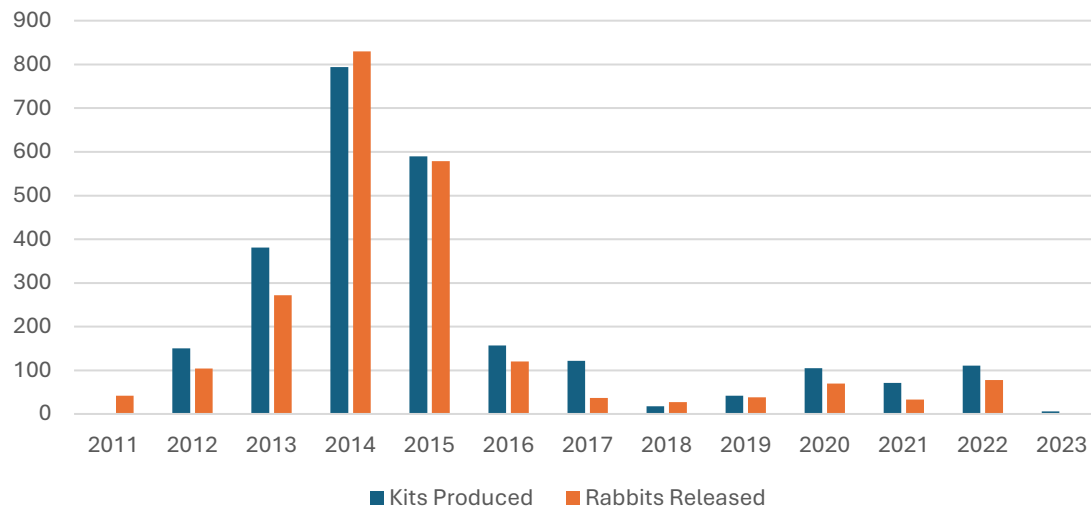


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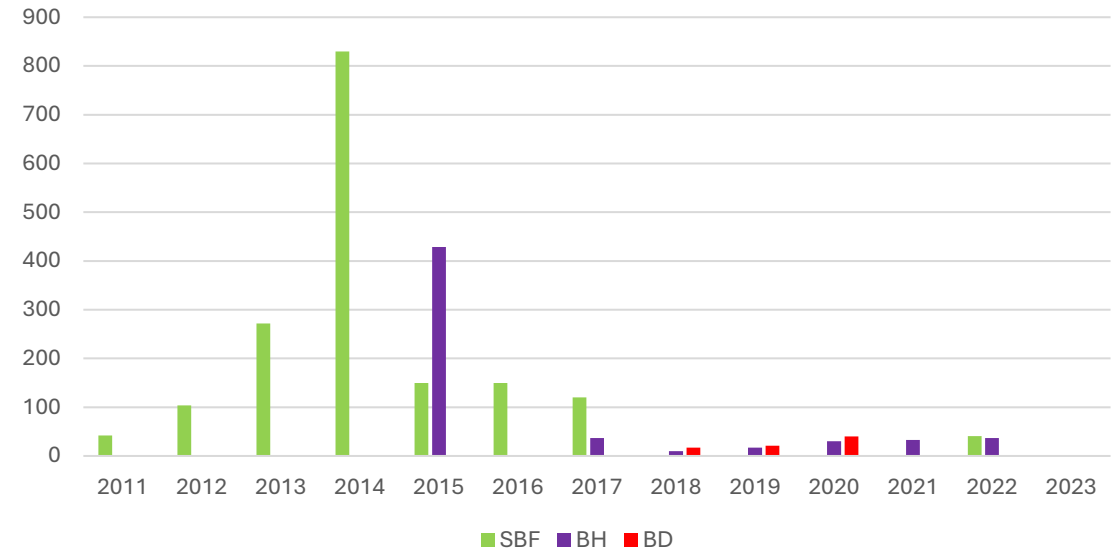
# Breeding Enclosure Population

Since 2011: 2,547 kits produced in breeding enclosures  
2,230 rabbits released in SBF (n=1,559), BH (n=593), BD (n=78).

Number of Kits Produced and Released from Breeding Enclosures



Number of Rabbits Released by Recovery Area

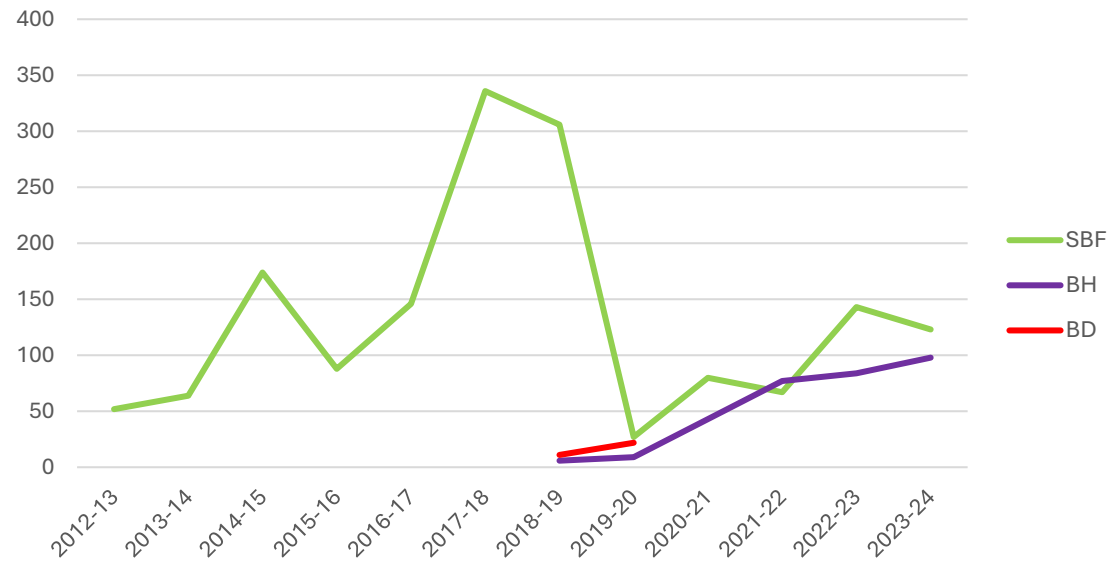


# Wild Population

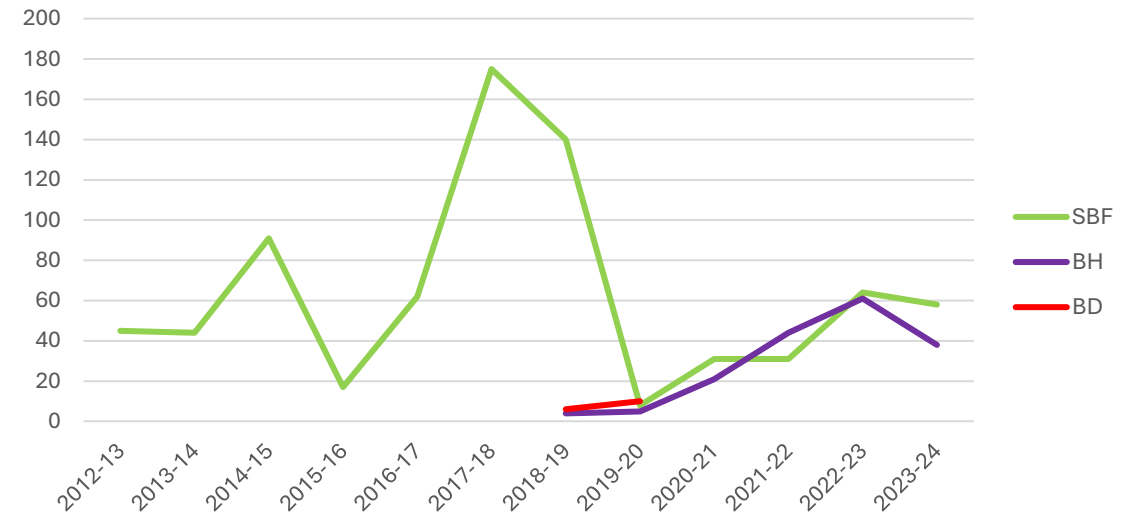
Two Subpopulations established: Sagebrush Flat and Beezley Hills.

Wild population =  $\geq 96$  rabbits (SBF:  $\geq 58$ ; BH:  $\geq 38$ ).

Number of Active Burrows in Recovery Areas

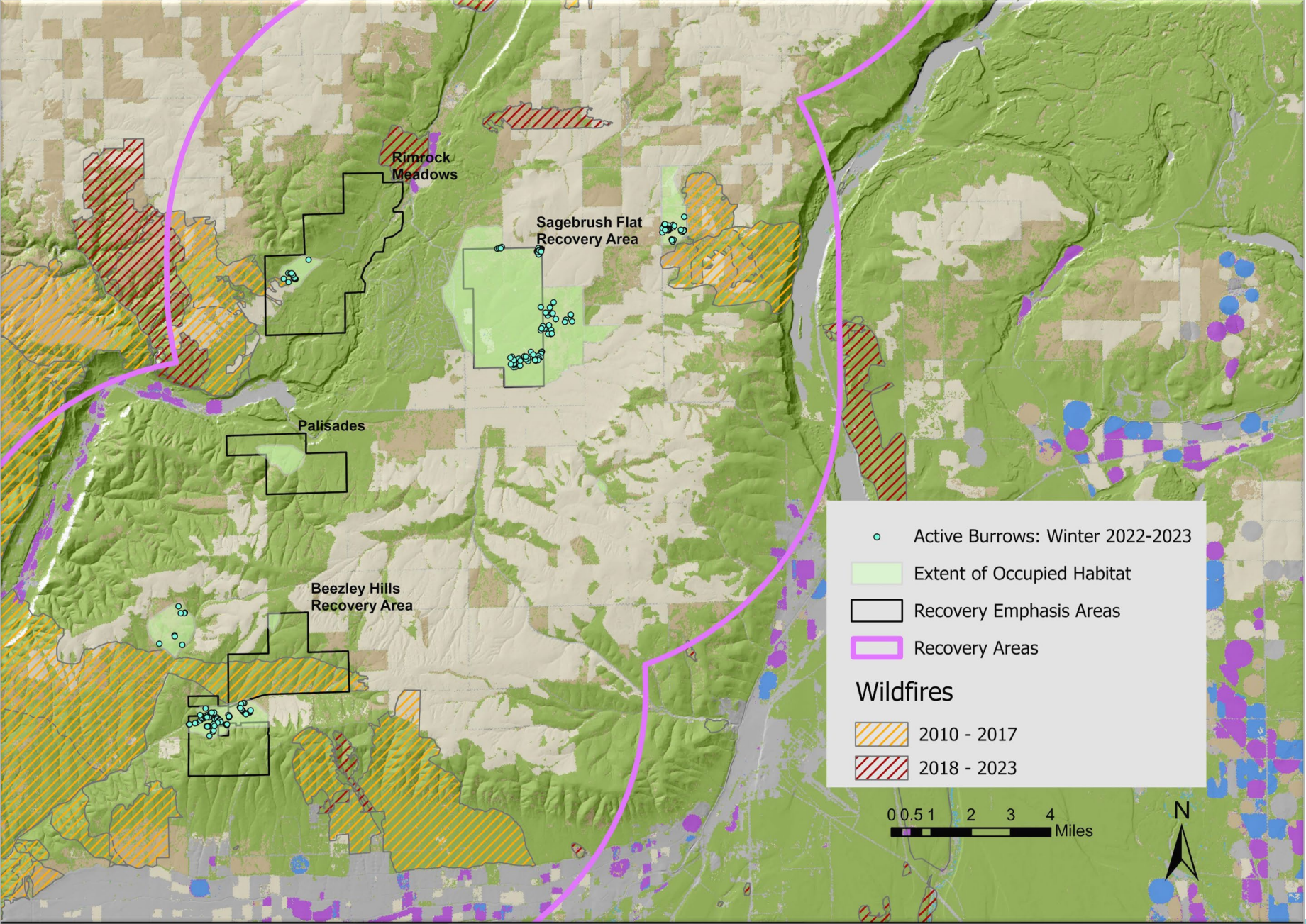


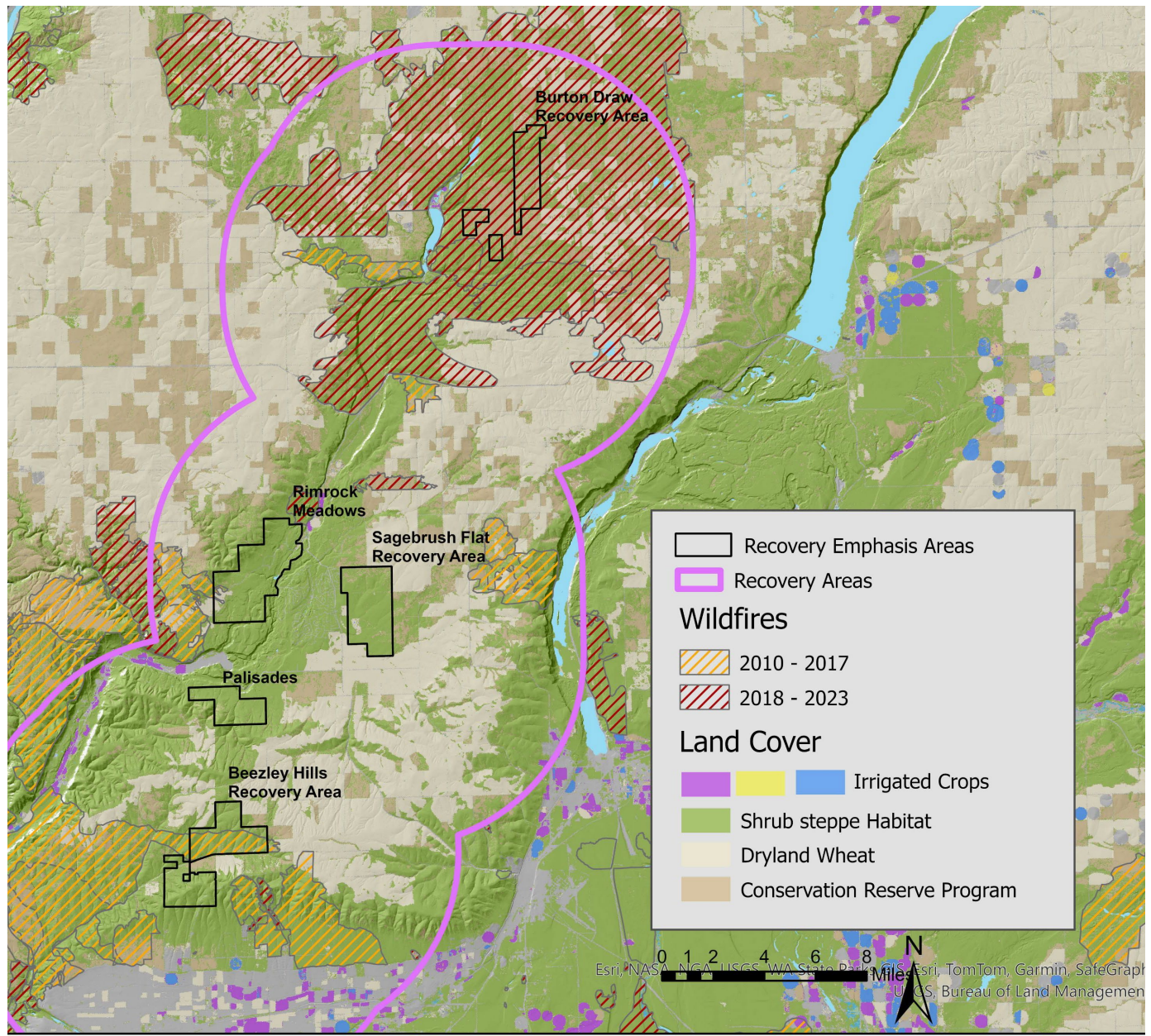
Number of Genetically ID Individuals in Recovery Areas



# Distribution

- Sagebrush Flat
- Beezley Hills





# Wildfires: impact recovery

# Factors Affecting Pygmy Rabbits

- Habitat loss, degradation, & fragmentation
- Small population size
- Disease (coccidia, RHD)
- Wildfires



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# Conclusions

State recovery criteria: down-listing from Endangered:

- Population of  $\geq 1400$  adult rabbits (5-yr avg.) in 6 populations.
  - 2 pops:  $\geq 500$  adult rabbits
  - 4 pops:  $\geq 100$  adult rabbits
- Secure habitat for 6 populations.

Current status:

- Population of  $\geq 96$  rabbits in 2 subpopulations.
- Secure habitat for 1 population.



# Public Comments

- WDFW received 25 public comments on the PSR that were supporting or neutral on the recommendation, with no additional comments on the content of the document.
- The Wildlife Diversity Advisory Council supports the agency recommendation to maintain endangered status.



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## Draft motion language:

**I move that the Pygmy Rabbit maintain its current status as an endangered species in Washington as recommended by Department staff.**



Gerald Hayes