

# Periodic Status Review: Pygmy Rabbit



Washington Department of  
*FISH and WILDLIFE*

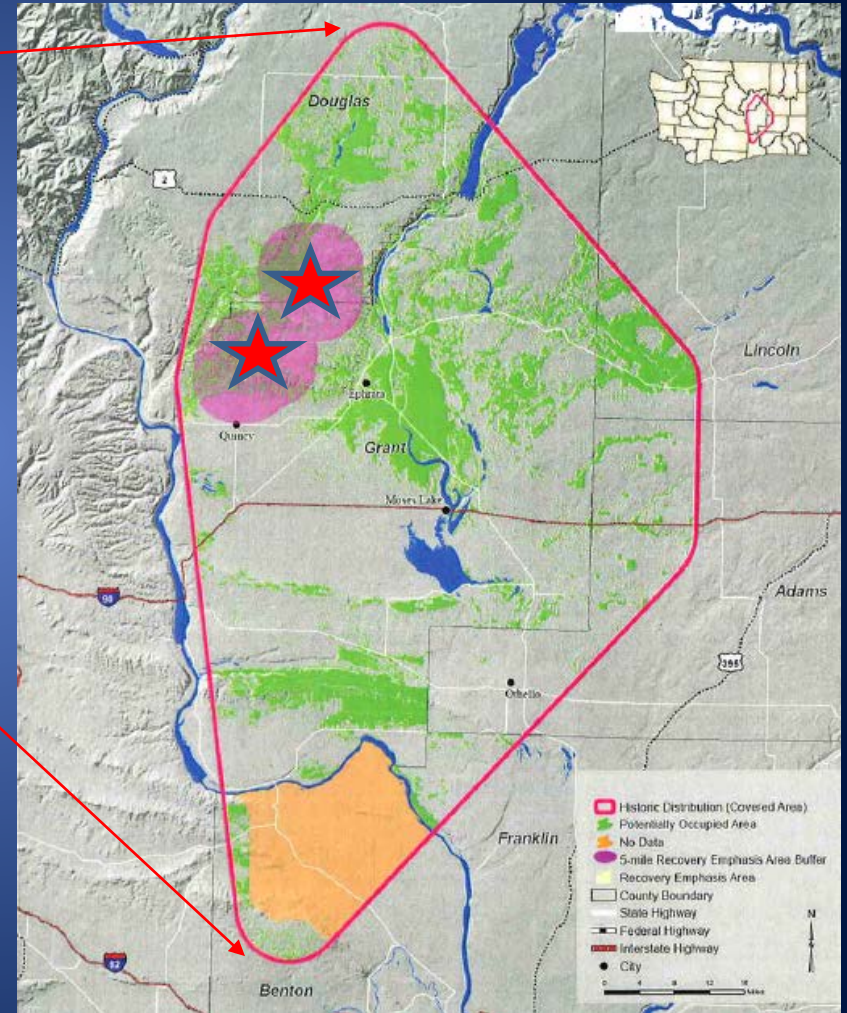
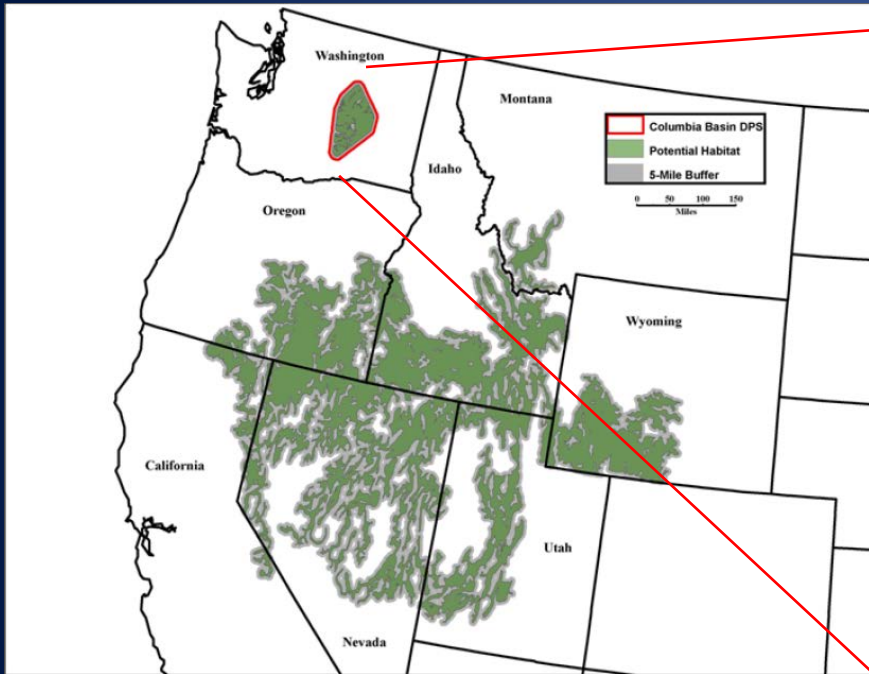
Gerry Hayes  
Biologist, Diversity Division  
Wildlife Program

# Description & Legal Status



- State threatened, 1990
- State endangered, 1993
- State Recovery Plan, 1995, 2011
- Columbia Basin population, genetically distinct
- Federal listing CB DPS as endangered, 2001, 2003
- Federal 5-yr status review, 2010
- Federal Recovery Plan 2012

# Distribution



# Natural History



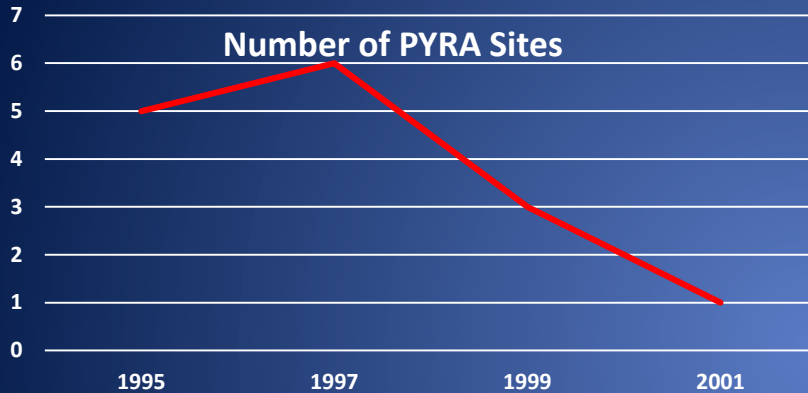
- **Reproduction:**
  - Breeding period: late Feb to early June
  - Gestation: 24 d
  - Natal burrow
  - Litter size: 4 kits; 3 litters/yr
- **Longevity:**
  - <3 yrs
- **Movements:**
  - Male home ranges larger than females

# Natural History



- **Habitat:**
  - Tall, dense stands of big sagebrush = yr-round food/cover
  - Deep, sandy-loam soils = burrows for shelter/raise young
- **Diet:**
  - Winter: 99% sagebrush
  - Spring/Summer: grasses/forbs increase.
- **Sagebrush/burrow obligates**

# Past Population Status



- 1995: 5 sites
- 2001: 1 site (SFWLA)
- 2001: 16 wild rabbits to establish founder captive population



# Captive Breeding Population



- Captive Breeding Facilities: WSU, OR Zoo, NW Trek
- Poor reproduction = low genetic diversity
- Intercross-matings with ID captive PYRAs
  - Genetic diversity/repro = improved
  - Survival of young declined; disease
- Insufficient numbers of rabbits for large scale reintroductions

# Recent Population Status

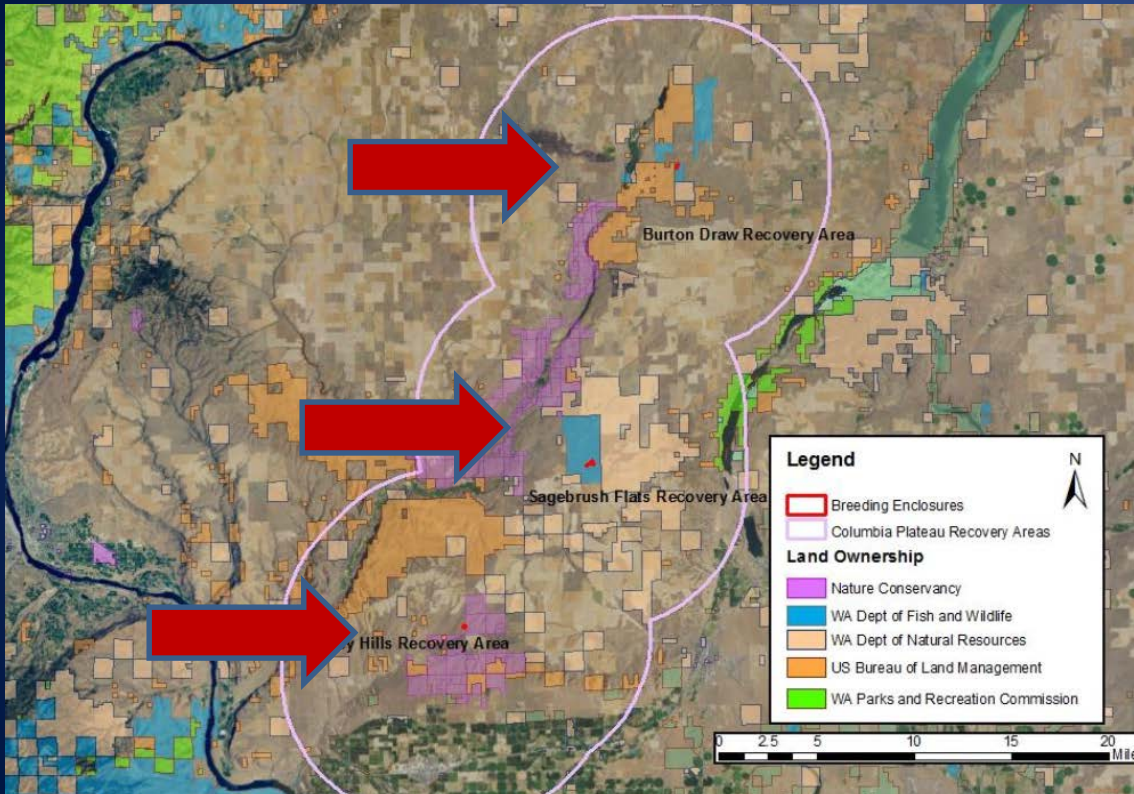


- Translocations
  - ( $n = 109$ : WY, UT, NV, OR)
- On-site breeding enclosures
- Release of kits/adults

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Total
Kits produced	0	150	381	794	590	155	152	2,222
Kits released	42	104	272	717	528	119	26	1,808
Adults released	0	0	0	113	51	1	0	165
Total released	42	104	272	830	579	120	26	1,973



# Pygmy Rabbit Recovery Areas



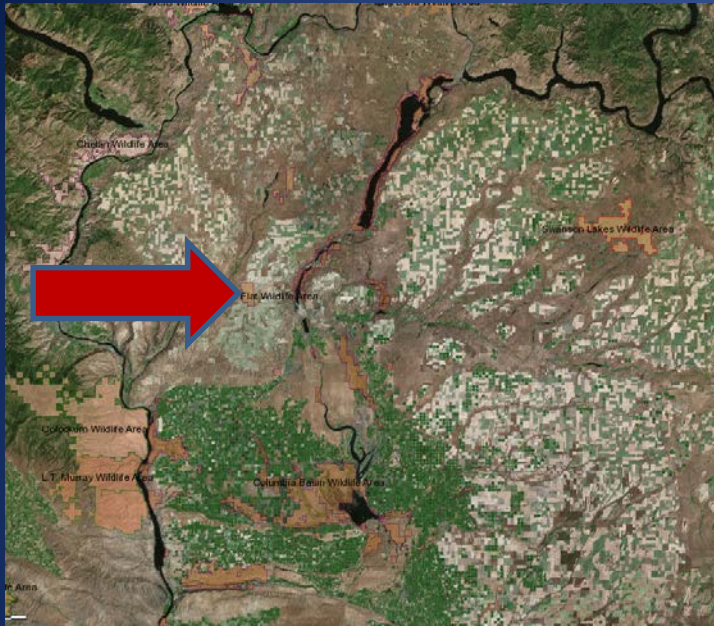
- 3 Recovery Areas
- 4 Breeding Enclosures
- Releases primarily on WDFW land (SBF)

# Recent Population Status



Winter burrow surveys on Sagebrush Flat Recovery Area						
	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
# Active Burrows	52	64	174	88	146	364
# Unique PYRAs	45	44	91	17	62	175
# Wild-born kits	4	4	3	15	58	TBD

# Factors Affecting Pygmy Rabbits



- Loss, degradation, fragmentation of habitat
  - Cropland
  - Exotic annual plants
  - Fire



# Factors Affecting Pygmy Rabbits



- Loss of genetic diversity
- Disease
  - Coccidiosis
- Predation

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Total
Kits produced	0	150	381	794	590	155	152	2,222
Kits released	42	104	272	717	528	119	26	1,808
Adults released	0	0	0	113	51	1	0	165
Total released	42	104	272	830	579	120	26	1,973

# Recovery Actions: Reintroductions

- Husbandry/Enclosure Maintenance
  - Weeds/Disease
  - Censuses
- Kit releases
- Post-release surveys




# Recovery Actions

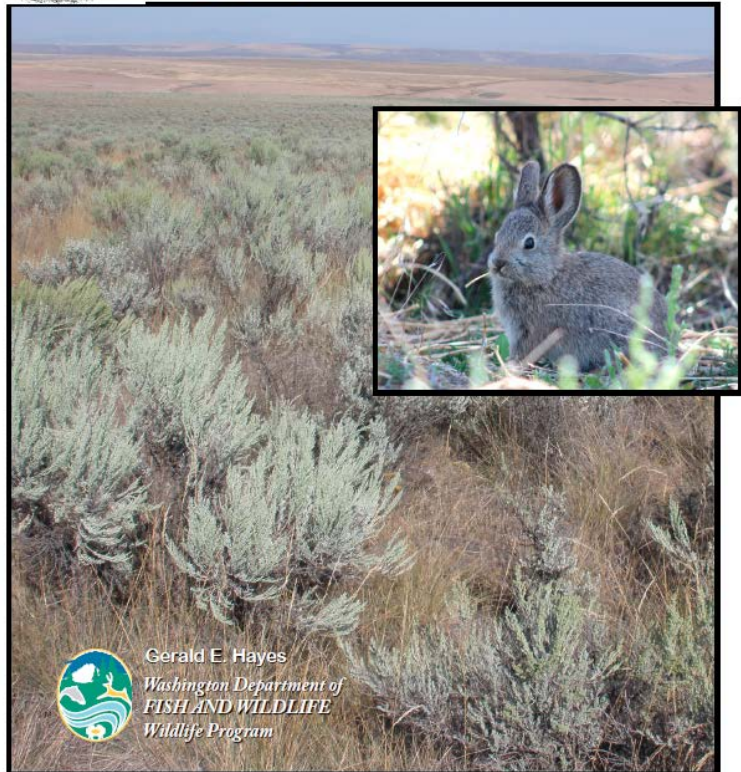
- State Recovery Plan, 1995, 2011
- Federal Recovery Plan, 2012
- Science Advisory Group
- Federal (BLM), State (WDNR), NGO (TNC) lands, release sites
- Safe Harbor Agreements, non-Federal lands
- Foster Creek Conservation District (MSGCP)
- Farm Service Agency/NRCS (CRP/SAFE)


# Recommendation

**DRAFT**

STATE OF WASHINGTON February 2018

 **Periodic Status Review for the Pygmy Rabbit**



 Gerald E. Hayes  
Washington Department of  
**FISH AND WILDLIFE**  
Wildlife Program

- Down-listing threshold: 1,400 adult rabbits in six populations on secure habitat
- Pygmy rabbit should remain listed as a state endangered species

# Public Comment

- Support for maintaining as endangered (7)
- Neutral comment (1)





# Questions?

