

## Endangered Species Act (ESA)

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*"Nothing is more priceless and more worthy of preservation than the rich array of animal life with which our country has been blessed."*

-President Nixon, upon signing the Endangered Species Act

### Overview

The Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA) was signed on December 28, 1973, and provides for the conservation of [species that are endangered or threatened](#) throughout all or a significant portion of their range, and the conservation of the ecosystems on which they depend. The ESA replaced the Endangered Species Conservation Act of 1969; it has been amended several times.

A "[species](#)" is considered endangered if it is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range. A species is considered threatened if it is likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future.

There are [approximately 1,900 total species](#) listed under the ESA. Of these species, approximately 1,320 are found in part or entirely in the U.S. and its waters; the remainder are foreign species.

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service \(USFWS\)](#) share responsibility for implementing the ESA. Generally, USFWS manages land and freshwater species, while NMFS manages marine and "[anadromous](#)" species. NMFS has jurisdiction over [68 listed species](#).

### Programs under the ESA

The ESA provides for different programs to conserve endangered and threatened species:

- Listing (Section 4)
- Critical Habitat (Section 4)
- Recovery (Section 4)
- Cooperation with States (Section 6)
- Interagency Consultation (Section 7)
- International Cooperation (Section 8)
- Enforcement of the ESA (Section 9)
- Permits & Habitat Conservation Plan (Section 10)

### How Does the ESA Define "Species"?

The term "species" under the ESA includes species, subspecies, and, for vertebrates only, "[distinct population segments \(DPSs\)](#)". Pacific salmon are listed as "[evolutionarily significant units \(ESUs\)](#)", which are essentially equivalent to DPSs for the purpose of the ESA.

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