



STATE OF WASHINGTON

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## **Report Card on Washington's Biodiversity Says "Room for Improvement," Highlights Need for Action**

OLYMPIA – A new report by the Washington Biodiversity Council highlights the need for action if the state is to stem the loss of its rich natural heritage.

Many plants and animals in Washington are at risk, according to the report titled *Washington's Biodiversity: Status and Threats*. It compiles information from multiple sources into one document and finds that:

- 40 types of animals (including 15 fish) and 10 types of plants are in danger of extinction, as indicated by their listing under the federal Endangered Species Act.
- Another 450 types of animals and plants are declining at rates that cause concern among state officials.
- More than 60 percent of the native plant communities are losing ground, which puts even more animals and plants in jeopardy.
- More than 50 percent of the Puget Sound and Columbia Plateau ecoregions—which comprise more than 40 percent of Washington's land base—has been developed or altered by human use, destroying native ecosystems.

"This new report both celebrates Washington's unique character and assesses the steep declines in the health of Washington's ecosystems," said Maggie Coon, chair of the Washington Biodiversity Council. "We continue to lose ground despite the many successful efforts to conserve habitat and species in Washington.

"Washington's biodiversity is the source of much of our state's economic and environmental character and vitality. This report will serve as the scientific basis for the Council's 30-year conservation strategy for Washington"

The council defines biodiversity as the full range of life in all its forms. Washington's biodiversity generates billions of dollars in the state economy, produces medicines and crops and provides recreation and inspiration. Native ecosystems provide clean water, clean air, natural flood control, habitats for animals and plants and numerous other essential ecosystem services.

"Our state's exceptional biodiversity provides a foundation for our cultural heritage; it gives us a sense of what it means to be a Washingtonian," said John Gamon, the report's primary author. "A strategy that looks ahead, includes everybody, and guides our actions will help make sure that our children and grandchildren can live well and enjoy all that Washington has to offer."

The threats affecting Washington's species and ecosystems include habitat loss and degradation, pollution, water quality and availability issues and the interruption of natural processes, such as wildfire.

"Population growth is causing a lot of these changes," Coon said. "The state's population of more than 6 million has doubled in the past 40 years, and projections show that it will increase to more than 8 million by 2030."

The full-color report may be requested at [info@biodiversity.wa.gov](mailto:info@biodiversity.wa.gov), or is available on the Web at [www.biodiversity.wa.gov/council/docs.html](http://www.biodiversity.wa.gov/council/docs.html).

The Washington Biodiversity Council was created by executive order in 2004 to develop and promote effective ways to conserve, steward and restore Washington's biological diversity. The council is charged with drafting a 30-year conservation strategy to present to the Governor in December 2007.

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