

What is the PHS List?

The PHS List is a catalog of habitats and species considered to be priorities for conservation and management. *Priority species* require protective measures for their survival due to their population status, sensitivity to habitat alteration, and/or recreational, commercial, or tribal importance. *Priority species* include State Endangered, Threatened, Sensitive, and Candidate species; animal aggregations (e.g., heron colonies, bat colonies) considered vulnerable; and species of recreational, commercial, or tribal importance that are vulnerable. *Priority habitats* are habitat types or elements with unique or significant value to a diverse assemblage of species. A *priority habitat* may consist of a unique vegetation type (e.g., shrub-steppe) or dominant plant species (e.g., juniper savannah), a described successional stage (e.g., old-growth forest), or a specific habitat feature (e.g., cliffs).

In general, areas of priority habitats of greater importance to fish or wildlife tend to have one or more of these characteristics:

- Habitat areas that are larger are generally better than areas that are smaller,
- Habitat areas that are more structurally complex (e.g., multiple canopy layers, snags, geologically diverse) are generally better than areas that are simple.
- Habitat areas that contain native habitat types adjacent to one another are better than isolated habitats (especially aquatic associated with terrestrial habitat),
- Habitat areas that are connected are generally better than areas that are isolated.
- Habitat areas that have maintained their historical processes (e.g., historical fire regimens) are generally better than areas lacking such processes.

There are 20 habitat types, 152 vertebrate species, 41 invertebrate species, and 10 species groups currently in the PHS List. These constitute about 17% of Washington's approximately 1000 vertebrate species and a fraction of the state's invertebrate fauna.

Numerous individuals and groups use the PHS List as well as associated PHS products (e.g., PHS Data) to inform conservation-related activities. Typical users include cities and counties that use PHS to fulfill planning requirements under the Growth Management Act and Shoreline Management Act, non-profit organizations such as land trusts that use PHS information to prioritize habitat protection, community groups working on local biodiversity planning initiatives (e.g., Pierce County Biodiversity Alliance), as well as other state and federal government agencies. Although some apply PHS to regulatory matters, PHS has also been used to inform incentive-based conservation initiatives (e.g., local conservation futures programs).

Questions regarding Priority Habitat and Species data and products can be directed to the appropriate regional contact. An up-to-date list of contacts can be found in WDFW's [Fish and Wildlife Planner](#) newsletter. To obtain PHS data, call (360) 902-2543, or visit the [PHS Website](#).