

Law and Policy (Module 1)

Slide 1: Title Page

Hi! Welcome to this first module in our online “Endangered Species Act Overview” course – an overview of the law and policy that will help you implement the Endangered Species Act.

I’m Holly Wheeler, a lawyer in the Office of the Solicitor’s branch of fish and wildlife. I’ll join you for this first lesson, which will help you understand the significance of the types of documents you’ll encounter as you handle endangered species issues.

My perspective is that of an attorney and a biologist. Before Vermont Law School, I earned a bachelor’s of science in fisheries and wildlife at the University of Missouri.

That’s given me grounding in what you do as a biologist every day, but also an appreciation for the importance of law in science. When an agency loses a lawsuit, it’s often not due to the adequacy of our science. Sometimes it’s because of a lack of understanding of when an agency has discretion or flexibility to deviate from a particular standard – and if it does have that discretion, how to use it.

Slide 2: Purpose

As we proceed through this module, we’ll discuss the legal foundations that support Endangered Species Act decisions. I’ll acquaint you with a number of terms and concepts that might seem quite dry. I will be informing you of the relative importance of the many different types of documents that you will encounter during your implementation of the Act.