

Slide 4: General Critical Habitat Information

Slide 5: Critical Habitat

When a species is listed under the Endangered Species Act, we are required to consider whether there are areas of habitat essential to the conservation of that species.

Critical habitat is a tool, often developed at the time of listing that assists in the recovery of that species by identifying areas essential to its conservation. Habitat that meets specific criteria is proposed for designation as critical habitat. A process of public review and comment starts.

Critical habitat designation is not required for species listed before 1978 and it is only required for species within the United States.

As of March 2011, 603 out of 1,371 domestic species listed as either threatened or endangered have had critical habitat designated. Many of the species for which no critical habitat has been designated were part of that early class of species listed before 1978.

Slide 6: Critical Habitat Defined

Here's the definition of critical habitat as it's found in Section 3(5)(A) of the Act. It's a long one, but I want you to notice the use of the word "and" that is used twice in these two subsections. There are some important procedural distinctions within. I'll read it along with you:

First: critical habitat includes "the specific areas within the geographical area occupied by the species at the time it is listed ... on which are found those physical or biological features essential to the conservation of the species and which may require special management considerations or protection, ...

This first section highlights that designation is most needed when proactive efforts are needed to conserve the habitat—some overt management or protection is needed.

Second: and . . . specific areas outside the geographical area occupied by the species at the time it is listed ... that such areas are essential for the conservation of the species."

The second part of the definition explains that unoccupied habitat can be included in a critical habitat designation, but this does not mean that all areas occupied by the species or all areas that can be occupied by the species should be designated. That's an important distinction.

A critical habitat analysis should identify and designate only the areas essential for the conservation and recovery of the species.

Now that we have covered some general information, let's proceed to our next topic, Critical Habitat Designation.