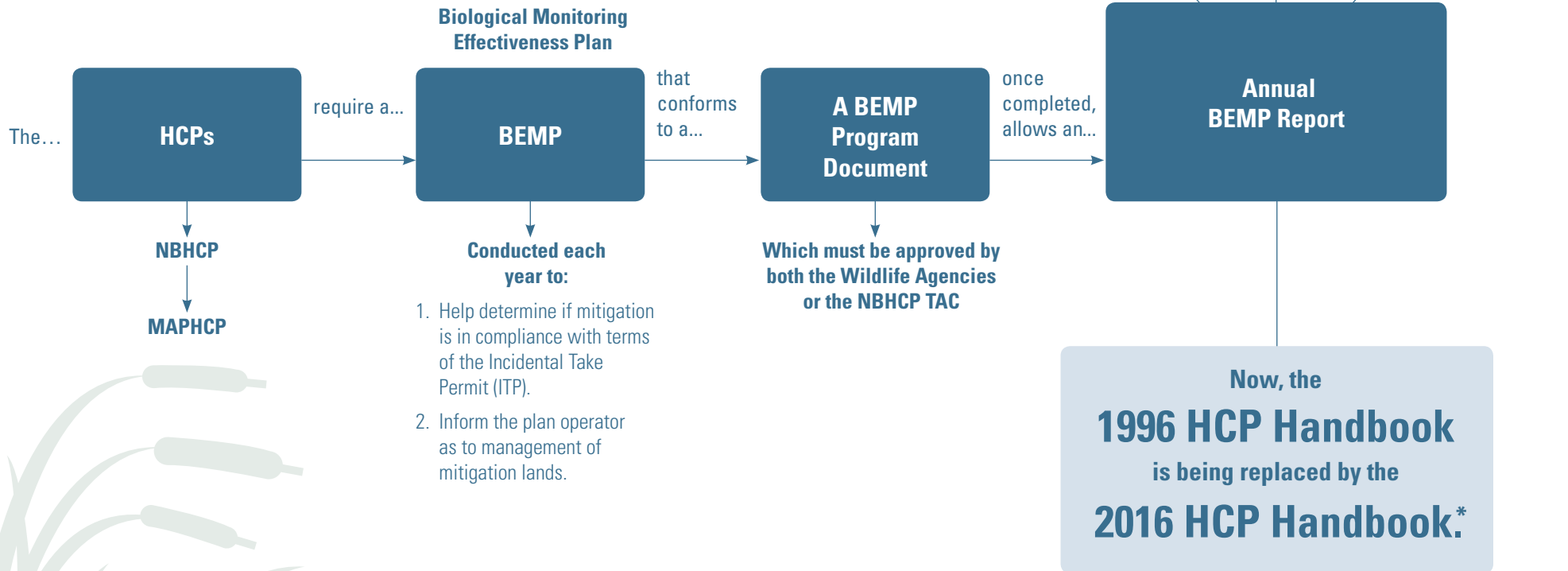
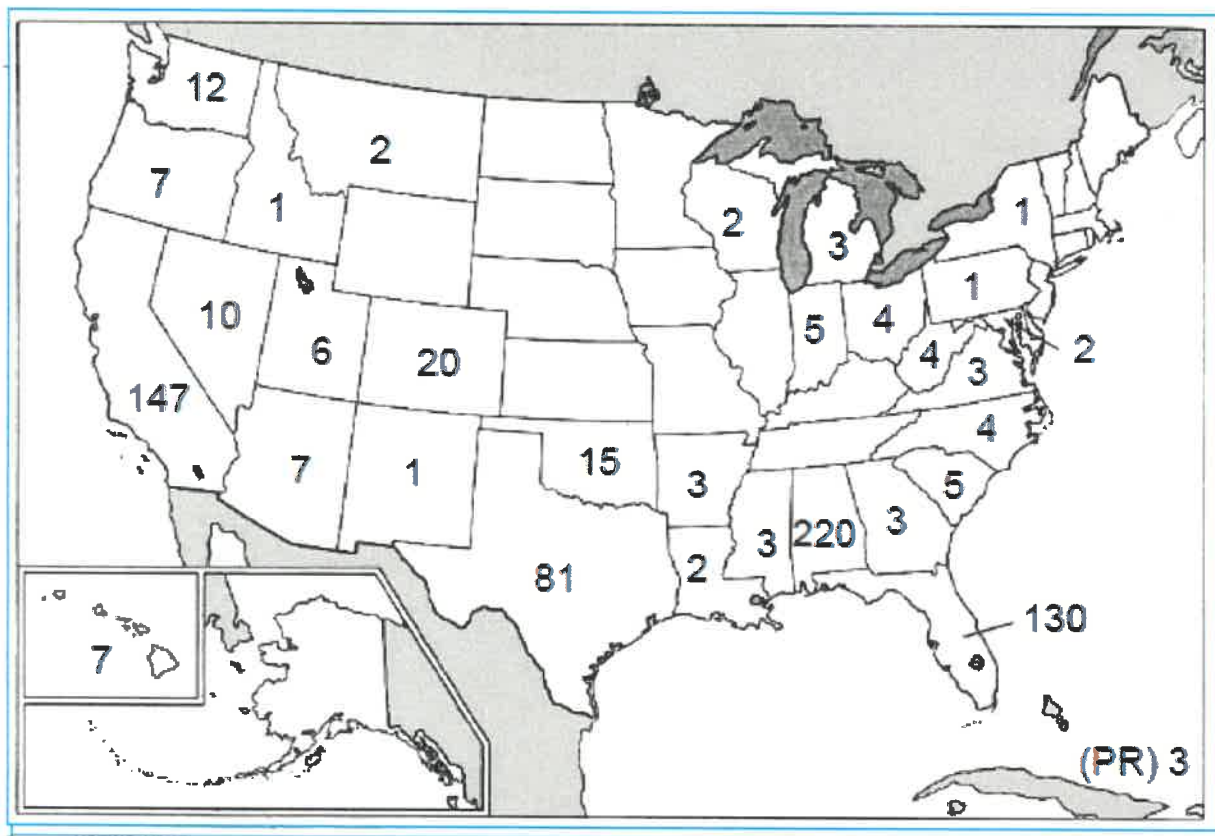


# What is the BEMP Process and will the New HCP Handbook change how the Conservancy Implements the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCPs)



\*A publication of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service.

## Overview: Locations of Approved HCPs



### NUMBER OF APPROVED HCPs

As of September 29, 2016:

- 682 HCPs
- 82 Amendments
- 830 Incidental Take Permits

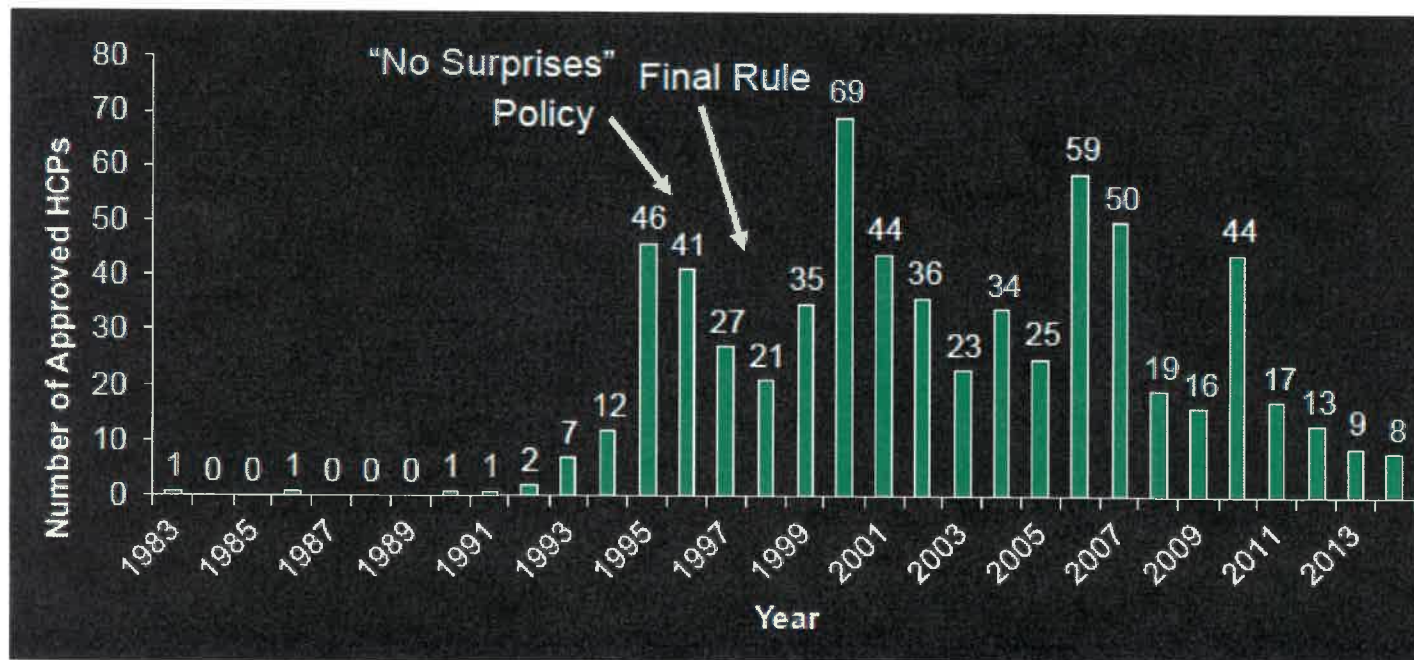


Source: USFWS 4/6/12



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## Growth in HCPs

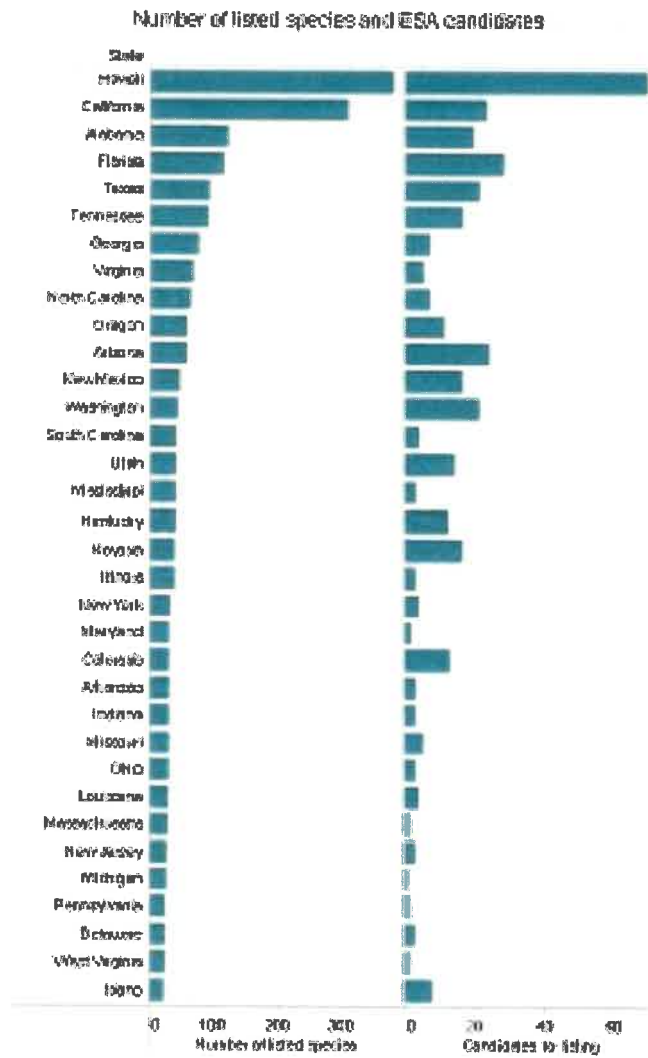


Source: USFWS 7/24/2015



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# Challenges with Listings



Source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

- Process is capped at 2 years and 90 days (to the maximum extent practicable)
- Emily Puckett, et al. recently determined that it has taken, on average, 12.1 years for species to go from petition to listing
- There is a huge backlog of petitions (> 500)
- To address these issues, the Services recently:
  - Issued a new policy for prioritizing petitions
    - Created five priority categories or “bins” to organize petitions based on need and likelihood of conclusive results
  - Promulgated a new regulation that, inter alia:
    - Requires petitioners to notify state wildlife agencies before submitting
    - Limits petitioners to one species per petition

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- Appendix C: Required Habitat Conservation Plan Elements and Recommended HCP Outline**



## Executive Summary

Drawing on over 30 years of experiences, remarkable successes, and valuable lessons learned, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) (hereafter “Services”) are pleased to share with you this revised Habitat Conservation Planning (HCP) Handbook (Handbook). The revised Handbook is the culmination of hard work and dedication by Services staff. It reflects our common commitment to actively advance the congressional findings, purpose, and policies of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), including providing a means to foster relationships with public and private partners; reduce conflicts between listed species and economic activities; and promote long-term conservation of listed species and the ecosystems on which they depend.

Since the original HCP Handbook was published in 1996 (61 FR 63854), over 1,000 HCPs covering more than 46 million acres of land have been approved nationwide. During that time, the development and implementation of HCPs has evolved in response to advances in science and technology, changing public expectations, and feedback from our partners. For example, advances in computer technology and geospatial sciences have dramatically improved the way we view and understand species, habitat, and their connection to the larger landscape. In addition, the human dimension of the HCP process has become more complex with changes in public perceptions and expectations. Our experiences and input from our partners has highlighted concerns about the complexity, cost, and time commitment required to develop HCPs.

We addressed these opportunities and concerns by establishing process standards and best practices, and also through new and refined policy guidance and procedures. These changes are meant to streamline the HCP process and increase the overall effectiveness of the program. The revised Handbook is designed to be more user-friendly and applicable in both print and web media. We reorganized the Handbook’s contents to reflect each phase of the HCP process and include tools and templates to facilitate completion of each phase. We clarified important concepts like maximum extent practicable, adaptive management, and changed and unforeseen circumstances and refined our guidance on compliance with other Federal laws and regulations. We also established guidance for addressing climate change, effective communication and coordination with stakeholders, and reaffirmed our commitment to integrity, respect, and teamwork in our HCP partnerships.

Finally, while the purpose of the revised Handbook remains to serve as an instructional aid for Services staff, we think it will be equally helpful to other HCP practitioners, such as applicants, consultants, and partners. The knowledge gained from experiences and lessons learned are essential to making the HCP process more efficient and manageable in the future.

