

# How are Biological Goals and Objectives Developed?

## 1 Consider Starting with an HCP Vision Statement

A Vision Statement is a concise statement of what an HCP conservation program should be, based on Covered Species needs and applicable regulations, policy, and guidance. Not all HCPs have a vision statement; however, it can be helpful for developing biological goals.

## 2 Follow USFWS Guidance

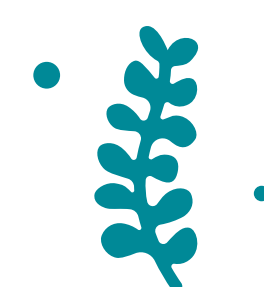
The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) has developed the *Habitat Conservation Planning and Incidental Take Permit Processing Handbook*, which offers guidance for developing biological goals and objectives.

### USFWS Guidance on Biological Goals

Biological goals can be **habitat-based** or **species-based**, and each should contain four elements:

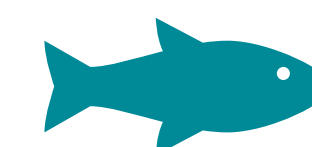
- ✓ The key **subject** of concern (i.e., a particular species or habitat type)
- ✓ The **attribute** of interest for that subject (i.e., population size or species composition)
- ✓ The **target** or condition for the attribute (i.e., a number or historic condition)
- ✓ The **action** or effort that will be made to achieve the target (i.e., restore or maintain)

#### Examples of Biological Goals



##### Habitat-Based Goal

Maintain and enhance native submerged aquatic vegetation communities that are resilient and diverse to benefit Covered Species and promote biodiversity



##### Species-Based Goal

Maintain or increase fountain darter populations in the Comal and San Marcos springs systems to sizes that are self-sustaining and resilient to periods of drought

### USFWS Guidance on Biological Objectives

Biological objectives are **incremental steps** taken to achieve a goal. They are **measurable targets** to determine if biological goals are achieved. Objectives provide a foundation for **developing conservation measures** and always **link to a monitoring program**.

The elements of a well-developed biological objective should follow the **SMART acronym**:

- ✓ **Specific:** describe *what, who, when, and where*—but not *how* (how = conservation measures)
- ✓ **Measurable:** ability to monitor progress toward the goal (quantitative or qualitative)
- ✓ **Achievable:** the Permittee can control or affect the outcome
- ✓ **Result-oriented:** describes an outcome
- ✓ **Time-fixed:** can be accomplished within the permit duration

#### ? Question to Consider

How do key management objectives in the EAHCP meet SMART criteria?

