





WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES



May 10, 2017

MEMORANDUM

TO: Forest Practices Board

FROM: Sherri Felix, Forest Practices Policy Analyst, Department of Natural Resources 
 Gary Bell, Forest Habitats Wildlife Biologist, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife 

SUBJECT: 2016 Annual Report on the Board’s Voluntary Cooperative Protection Approach for Taylor’s Checkerspot Butterfly (*Euphydryas editha taylori*)

The ninth annual report on the status of the Forest Practices Board’s (Board) voluntary protection approach for the Taylor’s checkerspot butterfly is attached. This report covers the 2016 calendar year.

On September 11, 2007, the Board approved a voluntary cooperative protection approach for the state listed Taylor’s checkerspot butterfly, as recommended by the Washington Department of Natural Resources (department) and supported by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). At that time, the Board also directed both agencies to annually report to the Board on the status of their voluntary protection approach.

In late 2013, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) listed the Taylor’s checkerspot as endangered and designated critical habitat under the federal Endangered Species Act. At your February 11, 2014 meeting, the Board accepted the department’s recommendation, supported by WDFW, to expand its voluntary protection approach to include USFWS’ critical habitat. Additionally, the Board accepted the agencies’ recommendation to continue annual reporting beyond the initially approved reporting period, given the precarious status of the species. The current map containing WDFW and federal habitat areas is attached.

In April 2016, WDFW completed their Periodic Status Review for Taylor’s Checkerspot. WDFW concluded the species remains threatened with extinction in Washington even though “a committed collective of agencies and individuals have made tremendous efforts to address threats and recover this species in Washington”. As a result, WDFW recommended the species remain state listed as endangered, and the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission agreed with that recommendation in August 2016.

Time is allotted at the May meeting during Staff Reports should you have questions, comments, or suggestions on the report and/or the species. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact us: sherri.felix@dnr.wa.gov or 360-902-1446; gary.bell@wdfw.wa.gov or 360-902-2412.

Attachment

cc. Joseph Shramek, Marc Engel, Marc Ratcliff
Amy Windrope, Terry Jackson, Ann Potter, Hannah Anderson



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES



2016 Annual Report to the Forest Practices Board

The Status of a Voluntary Cooperative Approach for the Taylor's Checkerspot Butterfly

May 10, 2017

SPECIES BACKGROUND

Once common in the Pacific Northwest, the Taylor's checkerspot butterfly (*Euphydryas editha taylori*) remains on only a handful of sites. The species was listed by the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) as State Endangered effective March 2, 2006. On November 4, 2013, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service also listed the species as endangered and designated critical habitat under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Based on recommendations from the state's periodic status review for the butterfly, the Commission retained the species' State Endangered status on August 5, 2016.

In Washington State, the Taylor's checkerspot inhabits highly localized areas. Occupied sites occur within state and private forestland in eastern Clallam County. These sites consist of small grassy "balds", shallow-soiled openings situated within the forest matrix that do not support timber production. Occupied sites also occur on federal land on Joint Base Lewis-McChord in southern Pierce County in native grassland (prairie) settings and on bald habitats within the northeastern Olympic National Forest, and on a non-forested, sandy, coastal private property in Clallam County.

The federally designated critical habitat for the species includes unoccupied areas involving non-federal forestland in eastern Clallam, southern Thurston, and northern Island counties. These unoccupied areas meet the habitat needs of the species, and may have historically been occupied sites.

Taylor's checkerspot butterflies complete their entire one-year life cycle in a small area where suitable climate and vegetation occur. Therefore, the species is always present on occupied sites.

HISTORY

2006 BOARD RESPONSE TO STATE LISTING AS AN ENDANGERED SPECIES

On May 10, 2006, the Forest Practices Board (Board) determined there is sufficient potential risk to the Taylor's checkerspot butterfly from certain forest practices activities to consider rule making and other protection strategies. The Board directed Department of Natural Resources (DNR) staff to notify the public of its intention to consider rule making.

From April 2006 to August 2007, DNR held meetings attended by Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) experts, forest landowners, and other interested stakeholders including the Washington Butterfly Association and The Nature Conservancy. Discussions focused on the butterfly's habitat requirements, potential effects of certain forest practices, and protection strategy options. Additionally, WDFW staff met with individual landowners and land managers having checkerspot habitat to further discuss voluntary protection and management options. During this process, the five large forest landowners who owned or managed occupied butterfly sites committed to develop management plans with WDFW.

On [September 11, 2007](#), the Board approved the voluntary protection approach recommended by DNR and supported by WDFW. This decision recognized the work of DNR and WDFW in conjunction with stakeholders and the commitments from landowners to develop management plans, as well as DNR's conditioning authority to protect public resources.

In light of the precarious status of the species and the related need for protection and management assistance from forest landowners, the Board directed DNR and WDFW to annually report on 1) any butterfly protection issues associated with individual Forest Practices Applications or Notifications (FPA) and 2) the status of approved landowner management plans. Additionally, once those landowners who committed to develop management plans had successfully done so, annual reports would occur every 5 years.

2009 CO-AGENCY TRAINING

In March 2009, DNR and WDFW conducted a formal training for staff from both agencies. This training highlighted the species life cycle and habitat requirements, and the species sensitivity to possible impacts, and clarified agencies' roles and responsibilities for processing, reviewing, and conditioning FPAs.

2014 BOARD RESPONSE TO FEDERAL DESIGNATION OF CRITICAL HABITAT

On [February 11, 2014](#), the Board accepted DNR's recommendation supported by WDFW to include the federally designated critical habitat in the screening process and continue implementation of the voluntary cooperative protection approach. In the spring of 2014, the federally designated critical habitat areas were incorporated into DNR's GIS screening tools. Accordingly, review of FPAs and outreach to forest landowners extended to additional nonfederal forestlands in Clallam, Thurston, Island, and Skagit counties.

The Board also accepted the agencies' recommendation to continue annual reports rather than reporting every five years. Immediate reporting to the Board will occur if it appears the voluntary approach is not appropriately protecting the Taylor's checkerspot butterfly.

2016 FOREST PRACTICES APPLICATIONS AND NOTIFICATIONS

This is the ninth year since DNR and WDFW initiated the Board's approved interagency screening process for FPAs with the potential to impact the Taylor's checkerspot butterfly on WDFW known occupied sites. It is also the third year since the Board expanded this screening process to include both WDFW's GIS locational data for occupied sites and U.S.

Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) GIS data for the 2013 federally designated critical habitat.

INTERAGENCY SCREENING PROCESS

When an FPA is within one mile of, or within, either a WDFW identified occupied site or a federally designated critical habitat area, DNR notifies WDFW. WDFW reviews these FPAs for potential impacts resulting from proposed forest practices activities. If necessary, WDFW will work with the landowner/land manager to protect the site and species. Short of landowner action, WDFW may request protective FPA conditioning by DNR which provides a safety net of protection.

FPA SUMMARY FOR 2016

No FPAs were proposed within WDFW identified occupied Taylor's checkerspot habitat or within any federally designated critical habitat.

A total of ten FPAs occurred within the one-mile screening buffer around WDFW identified sites or around federally designated critical habitat:

- Four FPAs related to WDFW identified occupied habitat.
- Six FPAs related to federally designated critical habitat.

Four of the ten FPAs occurred within the one-mile screening buffer from habitat edge to 0.5 mile:

- Two Class III FPAs from two large landowners were for even-aged harvest and road construction. One of these landowners has a WDFW approved Taylor's checkerspot protection plan.
- One Class III FPA from a large landowner was for even-aged harvest, right-of-way harvest, road construction, rock pit development, and stream crossings. This landowner has a WDFW approved protection plan.
- One Class II FPA from a small landowner was for even-aged harvest and road construction.

Six of the ten FPAs occurred within the one-mile screening buffers from 0.5 to 1.0 mile:

- Two Class III FPAs from one large landowner for stream crossing aerial fertilization. This landowner has a WDFW approved protection plan.
- Four Class III FPAs were from four small forest landowners. Together, these FPAs involve salvage harvest, even-aged harvest, road construction, right-of-way harvest, stream crossing, and rock pit development.

None of the forest practices activities mentioned above were determined by WDFW to pose a risk to the species or were conditioned by DNR for Taylor's checkerspot protection.

BUTTERFLY SITE MANAGEMENT PLANS AND LANDOWNER STATUS

Utilizing information developed during stakeholder involvement, WDFW developed general guidance on what types of activities should be addressed by management plans in order to protect the habitat of occupied sites. In late 2006, this guidance was distributed to the five large forest landowners who owned or managed sites occupied by the butterfly at the time. WDFW subsequently modified the document based on landowner input. This guidance may

be updated in the future to provide clarity or to incorporate knowledge gained relative to protection and management of occupied sites.

Of the original five large forest landowners that owned or managed all or portions of occupied Taylor's checkerspot butterfly sites, three remain: Merrill and Ring Company, Weyerhaeuser Company, and DNR. Each of these landowners has a WDFW approved Taylor's checkerspot butterfly management plan. DNR acquired Green Crow's land and the Center for Natural Lands Management acquired Aloha's parcel (adjacent to the occupied habitat at Dan Kelly Ridge). The Center for Natural Lands Management is a conservation ownership in perpetuity, thus WDFW determined there is no need to develop a management plan for this ownership.

Eight small forest landowners own small portions of occupied Taylor's checkerspot sites, or own property immediately adjacent to occupied sites. The 2013 designated federal critical habitat resulted in a multitude of additional landowners in proximity to potentially suitable habitat for the species. WDFW screens for potential impacts from any FPA within one mile of federal critical habitat and all non-federal habitats identified by WDFW. Any potential conflicts for Taylor's checkerspot will be coordinated on a case-by-case basis. There have been no issues or concerns associated with individual FPAs since the Board approved its voluntary protection approach for the species, leaving WDFW confident the resource risk from forest management remains low.

PROTECTION BY COUNTIES

WDFW's Priority Habitats and Species (PHS) database with GIS Taylor's checkerspot data is regularly available to, and requested by, counties in order to identify known occupied butterfly sites for local land use planning. Counties (and the public) have access to this data via [PHS on WDFW's website](#).

Thurston County receives regularly updated PHS data from WDFW digitally. The county is still in the process of developing a Habitat Conservation Plan for prairie and oak woodland species, which will include Taylor's checkerspot butterfly strategies. Clallam, Island, and Skagit counties also receive this data upon request in support of specific plans or projects. Additionally, WDFW biologists use the PHS data to screen FPAs and various proposals going through the State Environmental Policy Act process for potential project impacts to the Taylor's checkerspot butterfly.

2016 SURVEYS AND CONSERVATION ACTIONS

BUTTERFLY SURVEYS

In the spring and summer of 2016, biologists from WDFW, Olympic National Forest, and Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM) cooperatively conducted surveys to monitor six of the eight existing, naturally occurring Taylor's checkerspot populations and the four reintroduction sites in Washington. The two sites not monitored occur on private land near Port Angeles and in a remote area of Olympic National Forest. The distribution of the 12 Taylor's checkerspot populations currently known to occur in Washington are discussed below.

South Puget Sound (Thurston and Pierce counties)

Taylor's checkerspot populations were monitored at one naturally occurring site on JBLM in Pierce County, and on four south Puget Sound prairies where WDFW has reintroduced captive-reared butterflies. Sampling data for 2016 show that single day abundance estimates for adult butterflies at the JBLM site were lower than numbers observed in recent years. However, single day abundance estimates at three of the four reintroduction sites were at or above previous estimates from natural recruitment, with one population formally categorized as established and a second population showing strong positive trends.

North Puget Sound (Clallam County)

Populations were monitored by the Forest Service on three sites and by WDFW on two sites located on state and private land. Survey efforts, which are weather-dependent, benefited from good spring weather in 2016. Butterfly numbers were comparable to previous recent years at the two sites monitored by WDFW and appeared to be lower at the sites located within Olympic National Forest.

CONSERVATION ACTIONS

South Puget Sound (Thurston and Pierce counties)

On-going Taylor's checkerspot conservation actions were achieved by WDFW, DNR's Natural Areas Program, and the Center for Natural Lands Management in partnership with USFWS, JBLM, and Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO). U.S. Department of Defense's Army Compatible Use Buffer Program continues to fund Taylor's checkerspot conservation actions outside JBLM. USFWS Recovery Funds continues to support WDFW's efforts to re-establish Taylor's checkerspot populations in south Puget Sound. DNR and WDFW also received grant monies for south Puget Sound prairie restoration from the RCO's Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program. Using these funding sources:

- 1) WDFW continued restoration and enhancement of habitat on three sites in Thurston County,
- 2) WDFW oversaw continuing large-scale captive-rearing and reintroduction efforts on two Thurston County and two Pierce County butterfly translocation sites,
- 3) DNR restored and enhanced additional habitat at the Bald Hill Natural Area Preserve, and,
- 4) The Center for Natural Lands Management restored and enhanced additional habitat on several Thurston County sites in preparation for ongoing and future butterfly reintroductions.

North Puget Sound (Clallam County)

WDFW and Forest Service biologists conducted habitat management and restoration activities at three occupied sites in the Dungeness River Watershed. Working together, DNR and WDFW continued habitat management and restoration at two Taylor's checkerspot sites located on DNR managed lands. The Center for Natural Lands Management conducted habitat management and restoration at their occupied site on Dan Kelly Ridge as well.

Additional Conservation Actions

Taylor's checkerspot is one of 21 Oregon and Washington rare and/or declining prairie and oak woodland species that received support from a 2012 and 2014 USFWS State Wildlife

Grant. The grant funded Prairie-Oak project has conducted conservation work for Taylor's checkerspot on south and north Puget Sound sites. Many partners cooperated to develop this project and have received funding, including WDFW, DNR, Oregon Department of Forestry, the Center for Natural Lands Management, The American Bird Conservancy, local land banks, public land managers, and private landowners from both states. In addition, Weyerhaeuser's participation in the project will continue to enhance and restore Taylor's checkerspot habitat on their lands in the Bald Hill area. WDFW is the project lead for Washington.

SUMMARY

The year 2016 marks the ninth year since the Forest Practices Board's 2007 approval of their voluntary cooperative protection approach for the Taylor's checkerspot butterfly. This is the third annual report to include the federally designated critical habitat for the species.

Currently, there are 12 known Taylor's checkerspot butterfly populations in Washington State. The distribution of those populations is:

- five in south Puget Sound, four of which are experimental reintroductions ,
- four on the Olympic National Forest, and
- three on state or private land in Clallam County.

No new Taylor's checkerspot populations have been located in Washington since 2009.

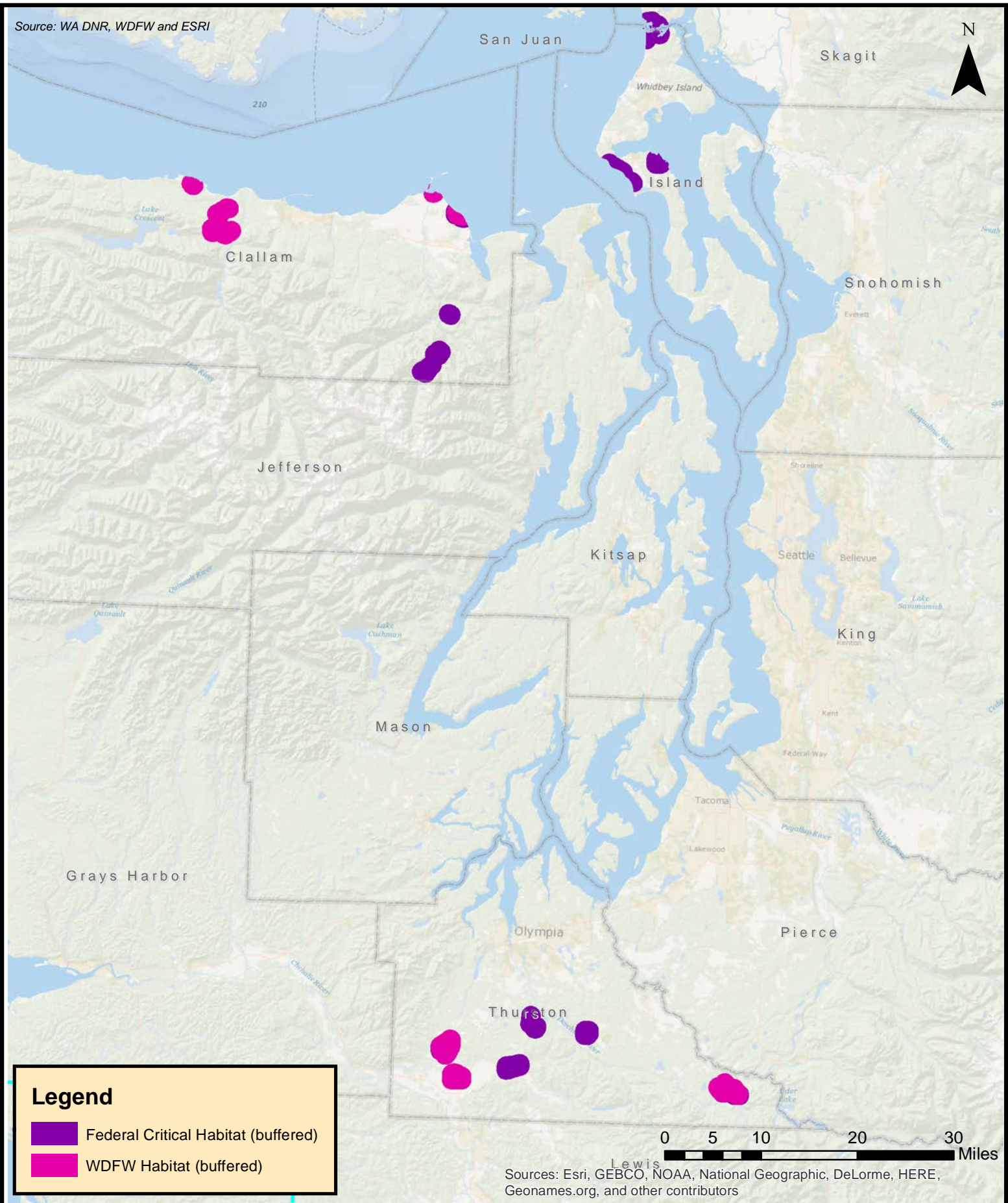
In 2016, there were a total of ten FPAs within the one mile screening buffer around a WDFW occupied Taylor's checkerspot site or the federally designated critical habitat for the species. In the nine years of implementing the Board's voluntary protection approach a total of 105 FPAs have been within the one mile screening buffer:

- 0 FPAs within a WDFW occupied site or federally designated critical habitat.
- 43 FPAs within the portion of the one-mile buffers from habitat edge to 0.5 miles.
- 62 FPAs within the portion of the one-mile buffers from 0.5 to 1.0 miles.

No Taylor's checkerspot protection issues have occurred with these 105 FPA and the associated forest practices activities. Therefore, WDFW has not requested and DNR has not conditioned these 105 FPAs for Taylor's checkerspot protection.

Ongoing cooperative conservation activities include WDFW, DNR, the Center for Natural Lands Management, USFWS, JBLM, Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office, and U.S. Department of Defense. County governments of Thurston, Clallam, Island, and Skagit continue to utilize WDFW's GIS locational data as they conduct their local land use planning.

Source: WA DNR, WDFW and ESRI



Legend

- Federal Critical Habitat (buffered)
- WDFW Habitat (buffered)

**Forest Practices
Division**



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**Figure 1:
Taylor Checkerspot Butterfly
Screening Areas**

NAD_1983_HARN_StatePlane_Washington_South_FIPS_4602_Feet
Drawn by: JT Couillard | Date: 4/20/2017