

WHAT IS THE PORT OF PORTLAND’S STREAKED HORNED LARK PROJECT?

The Port of Portland submitted a proposed Habitat Conservation Plan to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the conservation of the Streaked Horned Lark (*Eremophila alpestris strigata*), a threatened species under the federal Endangered Species Act. The plan allows for the Port to have a 30-year Incidental Take Permit to displace birds from industrial and airport land and create and manage habitat at the Sandy Island Conservation Area in the lower Columbia River. The USFWS is taking public comment on the proposed plan for 45 days beginning November 22, 2016.

WHY DID THE PORT CREATE A PLAN SPECIFIC TO THIS SPECIES?

The Port seeks to develop Rivergate industrial properties, replace a drainfield system and remove a berm at Portland International Airport as a component of the PDX Wildlife Hazard Management Program. The mission of the program is to control aviation wildlife hazards with non-lethal means when possible by discouraging birds from entering the airfield and long-range habitat modifications. These management activities could result in impacts to Streaked Horned Larks.

An Incidental Take Permit is required when non-federal activities could result in a “take” of threatened or endangered wildlife. A Habitat Conservation Plan must accompany the permit application. The purpose of the habitat conservation planning process is to ensure there is adequate minimization of and mitigation for the effects of the authorized incidental take. For example, in this project, interfering with nesting habitat to allow for commercial development would be considered a “take.” The Port proposed development of industrial and airport lands for their intended purpose will be done outside of nesting season to avoid direct harm to the bird. The Sandy Island Conservation Area is the proposed alternate nesting habitat to mitigate for the development.

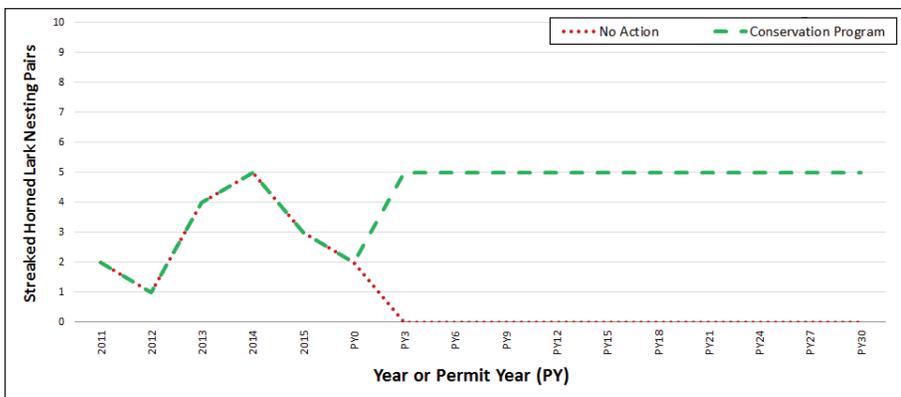
WHAT MAKES SANDY ISLAND CONSERVATION AREA AN IDEAL PLACE?

To offset for habitat loss in industrial areas, the Port would create and maintain 32 acres of land dedicated solely as Streaked Horned Lark critical habitat at Sandy Island, a former dredged material placement site in the lower Columbia River. Active vegetation management at a dedicated conservation area provides important long-term benefits to birds. Without it, the site is expected to naturally “fill-in” with plant growth, making it unsuitable. It is estimated that with the proposed site management, 148 nesting pairs would thrive over the duration of the 30-year permit term, which is the longest lease possible from the Oregon Department of State Lands. Additionally, Sandy Island is located within species range of Rivergate and PDX, providing a convenient locale for displaced birds. It is a remote area where they can nest and raise young—away from industrial development and the dangers of active aircraft.


WHY IS IT A SPECIES OF CONCERN?

The USFWS listed Streaked Horned Lark as a threatened species in 2013 under the Endangered Species Act; they are in decline due to their unique habitat requirements. This species only occupies sparse, recently disturbed grasslands in western Washington and Oregon. This habitat is almost completely eliminated by shoreline development, fire suppression and river damming—actions which effectively removed the natural disturbances of flood and fire that historically maintained their preferred open, sparsely vegetated habitat. For more information on the Endangered Species Act, please visit: www.fws.gov/endangered.

Sandy Island Conservation Area would be the **first and only** site that is managed solely for the conservation of Streaked Horned Larks.



Projected number of Streaked Horned Lark nesting pairs at the proposed Sandy Island Conservation Area through the term of the Habitat Conservation Plan. The 32 acre site has an assumed optimum nesting pair density of five, which is based on the highest recorded number of nesting pairs at the location between 2011 and 2015.

The Port would also provide interested organizations with the ability to access, research, and monitor streaked horned larks at the conservation area. Using the site as an outdoor laboratory would build the species ecological record to inform USFWS recovery planning. Data documenting the bird's response to the newly designated habitat will be publicly available.

- The proposed conservation program on Sandy Island addresses priority conservation actions for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, including:
- Secure sites dedicated to Streaked Horned Lark conservation.
 - Secure protection commitment on priority occupied sites.

STREAKED HORNED LARK HISTORIC RANGE AND CURRENT BREEDING SITES



HOW WILL THE SPECIES BENEFIT?

Both Rivergate and PDX properties are highly urbanized industrial landscapes that present hazards to Streaked Horned Larks; neither area is ideal for the overall health and sustainability of the species. At PDX, they face the additional danger of bird-plane collisions. In the absence of routine site management, these existing industrial habitats would naturally transition out of suitability through the natural succession of vegetation. In contrast, the proposed Sandy Island Conservation Area would be the first and only site that is managed solely for their conservation. Through developing and managing optimal habitat, the plan creates territory for a species that would otherwise face an uncertain future in nesting habitat availability. By implementing the Port's conservation plan, this species is provided a regional conservation area dedicated to their propagation for the duration of the permit term.

WHO WAS INVOLVED IN THE PLANNING PROCESS?

The Port works with the USFWS, the Federal Aviation Administration, other federal and state natural resource agencies, scientists, conservation organizations, and various stakeholders to protect Streaked Horned Larks. A Science Advisory Team of species experts provided technical guidance:

- American Bird Conservancy
- Center for Natural Lands Management
- The Nature Conservancy

To create the Habitat Conservation Plan, the Port obtained the assistance of:

- SWCA Environmental Consultants
- AKS Engineering & Forestry, LLC.

HOW DO I GET INVOLVED?

The USFWS is hosting a 45-day public comment period on the proposed Habitat Conservation Plan. The public can submit comments through the Federal Register website; visit www.federalregister.gov and search for Streaked Horned Lark to find the posting. For those with questions on the Port's plan or would like more information, please contact Lisa Appel, Environmental Outreach Manager, at lisa.appel@portofportland.com or at 503.415.6047.

Legend

- Lark Occurrences
- Historic Range