



Joint Recommendation After Uplisting of Western Gray Squirrel

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Report from DNR

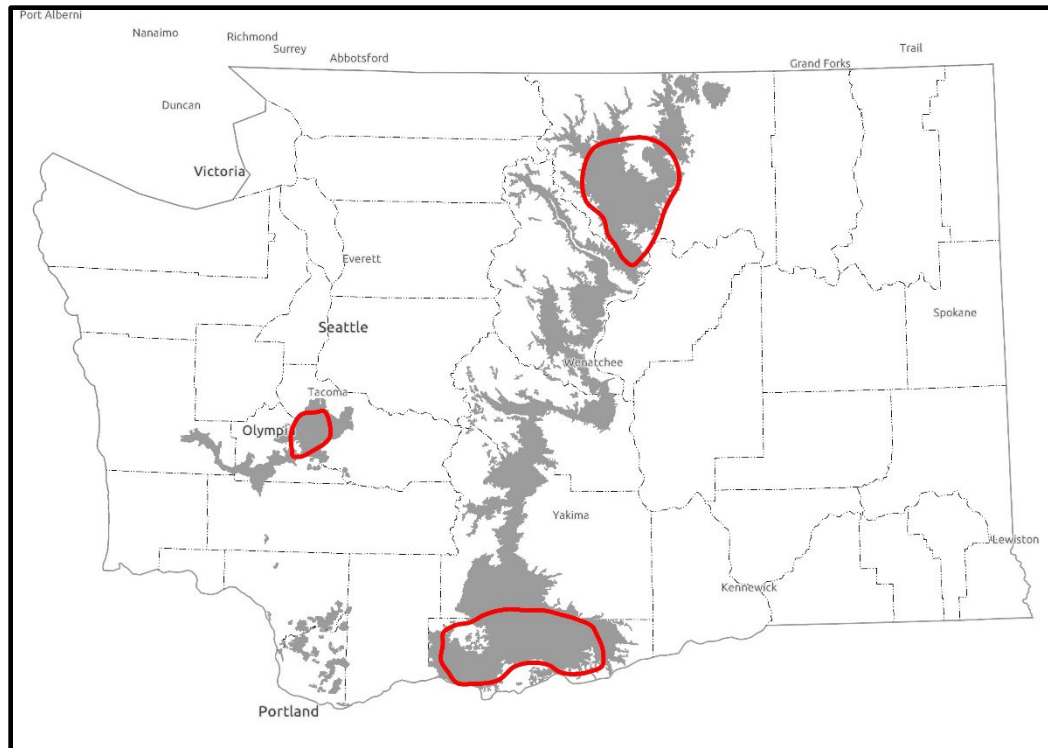
- DNR consulted with WDFW to determine critical habitat
- WDFW is the agency with expertise
 - Primary habitat is defined in the WDFW letter attached to the memo containing DNRs recommendations to the Board
 - WDFW has consistently communicated the need for additional data on distribution and abundance
- Concur with the joint recommendation found in WDFW letter and DNR memo to the Board



Natural History

In Washington:

- Once uncommon to locally common across range
- Declining by the late 1800s and rare by 1970



Natural History

- Conifer-dominated stands often with adjacent hardwoods
- Stick nests for sleeping and resting, cavity nests for rearing young
- Forage on the ground and in trees for seeds, acorns, hypogeous fungi (truffles) and other foods



Photo by Alan Schmierer



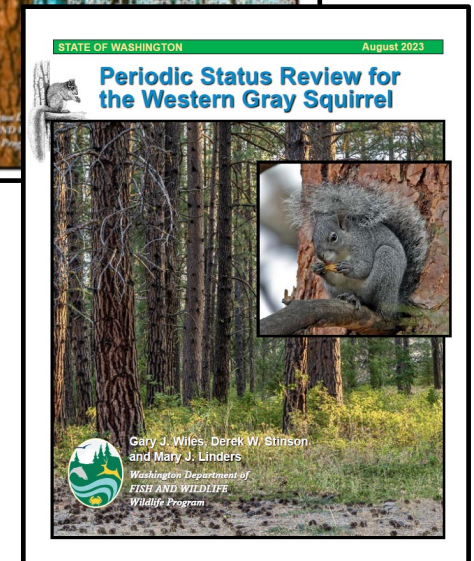
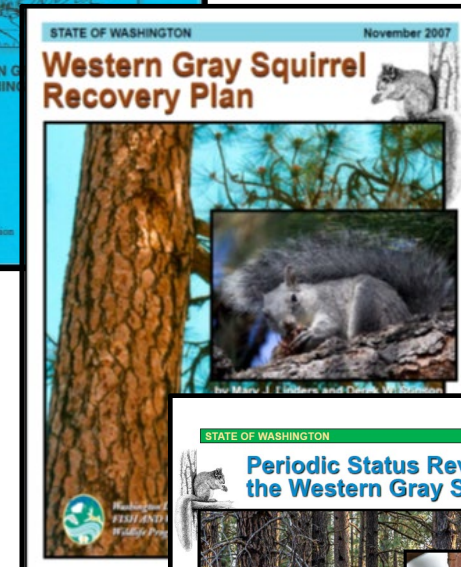
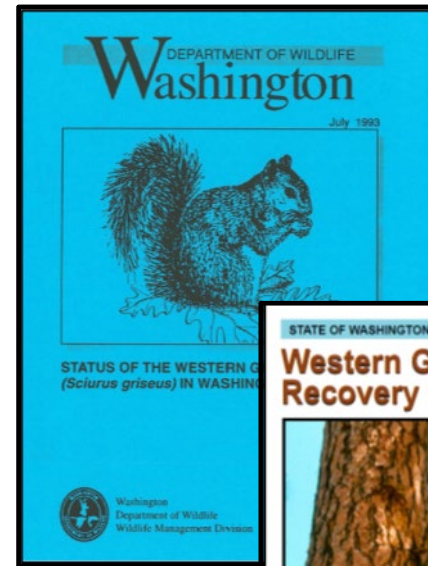
Listing History

State

- Threatened since 1993
- Recovery plan 2007
- Periodic Status Reviews
- WDFW Recommended Uplisting
- State Endangered December 28, 2023

Federal

- Not warranted 2004



Why were they uplisted?

2016 PSR

- Largely limited in distribution to three focal areas in the state;
- Population estimates have not been updated since 1994-2005;
- The North Cascades population has possibly declined since 2005;
- No information exists for habitat change in the South Cascades since listing.

Recommended no change in status

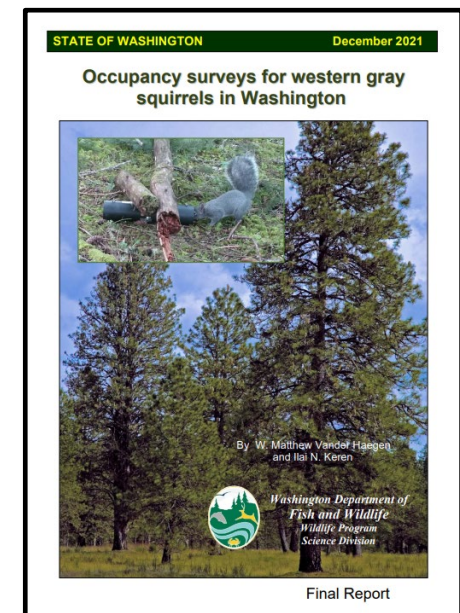
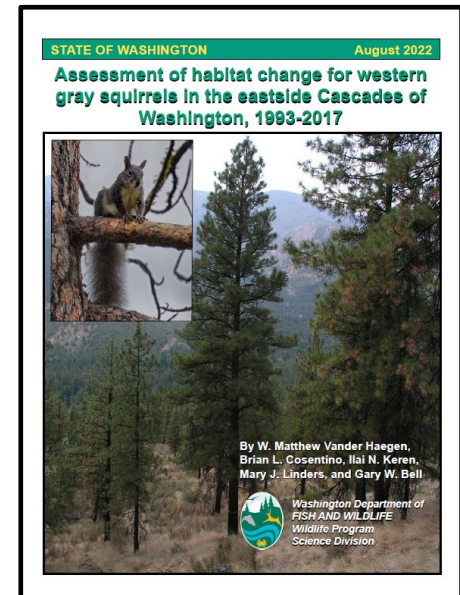


Habitat Change Since 1993

1. Estimate change in Primary habitat since listing (1993)
2. Estimate the relative contribution of different agents of change

Occupancy

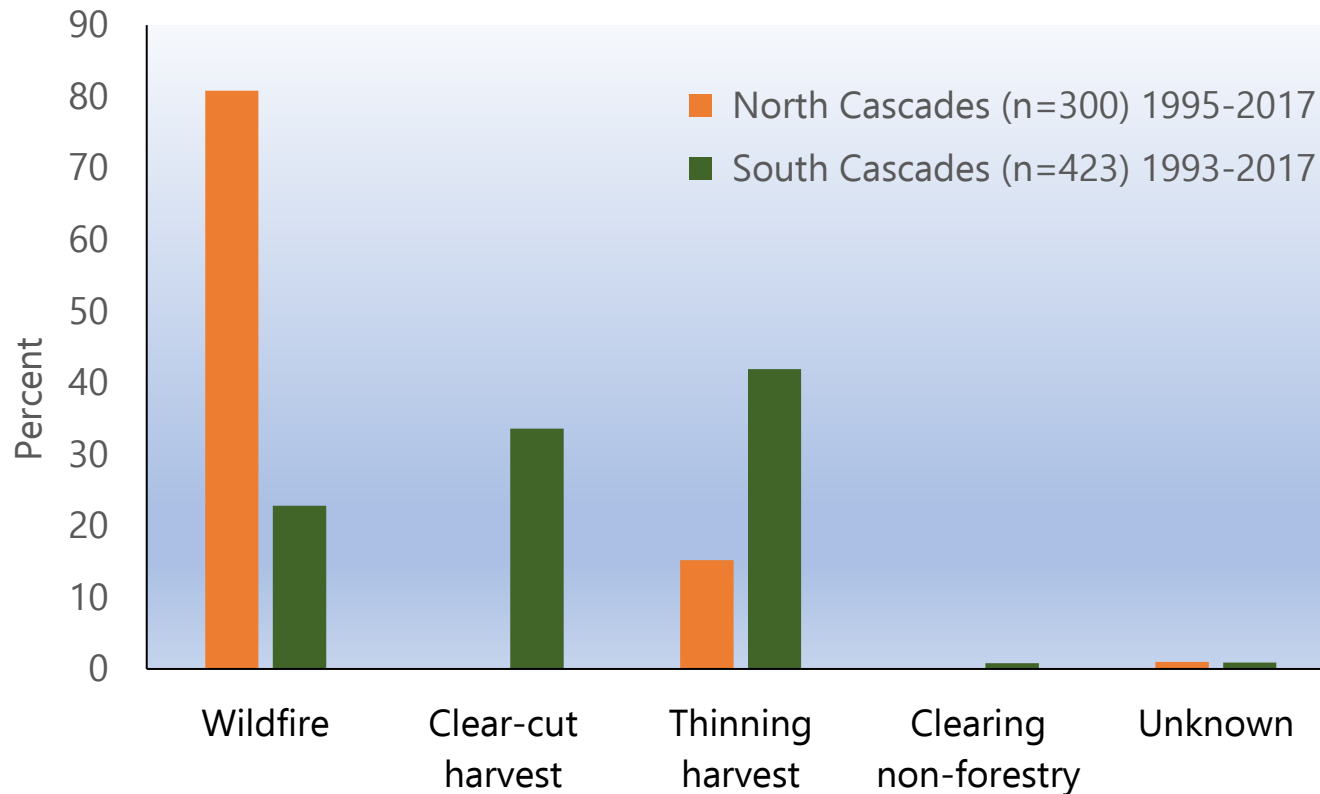
1. Difficult to count in the field
2. Previous efforts were project specific and not repeatable
3. Occupancy surveys allow monitoring of species that are difficult to count



Why were they uplisted?

Habitat Change

Net change in WGS Primary habitat: >20% decline



Why were they uplisted?

Occupancy surveys conducted 2018-2020

	# transects	Occupancy*	St Dev
Puget Trough	18	0.39	0.12
Klickitat	60	0.44	0.07
North Cascades	60	0.27	0.06

*detection probability was high (0.91, SE = 0.03)





WDFW recommended uplisting because:

- Primary habitat in both the North and South Cascades regions has decreased >20% since listing;
- The species' relatively small total population size;
- Isolation of the three populations;
- Landscape fragmentation;
- Wildfire and timber harvest.

Joint Recommendation to the Board:

Initiate a western gray squirrel Wildlife Working Group to:

1. Evaluate the existing volunteer measures completed to date and determine if they were implemented successfully and/or provided adequate protection.
2. Develop new alternatives to enhance or rebuild the existing volunteer measures as needed.
3. Consider the requirements for Critical habitat under WAC 222-16-80.
4. Develop recommendations on how to protect WGS habitat during timber harvesting and mitigation measures for land conversion by development.
5. Consider whether developing new rules would provide benefit to the species or whether revised volunteer measures would work.





Questions