CARRYING CONSERVATION FORWARD: POST-RECOVERY MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING FOR EGGERT’S SUNFLOWER (*HELIANTHUS EGGERTII*)

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In 1997, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed Eggert’s sunflower (*Helianthus eggertii*) as a threatened species. At the time the species was known from 34 occurrences, distributed among 13 counties: one in Alabama, five in Kentucky, and seven in Tennessee. Threats at the time of listing included habitat destruction or alteration due to development, right-of-way management, conversion to agricultural uses, or vegetation succession due to altered disturbance regimes; inadequacy of regulatory mechanisms for protecting the species and its habitat; drought; and presumed altered genetic structure and reproductive viability resulting from small population sizes. The Recovery Plan for Eggert’s Sunflower outlined a strategy consisting of three main components: (1) protecting and managing habitat; (2) maintaining genetic structure at both the species and population levels; and (3) educating the public and affected agencies and land-managers about the species’ status and conservation needs. The U.S. Air Force funded surveys and research to assess genetic variability and structure in the species, investigate life history, and evaluate habitat management practices. Numerous partners protected and managed habitat across the range of the species, and the Service developed cooperative management agreements with six of them to assure that these conservation measures would continue after delisting. Based on information gained through research and the fact that conservation measures had abated threats to 126 occurrences distributed among 27 populations, the Service determined that Eggert’s Sunflower no longer met the definition of threatened under the Endangered Species Act and delisted the species in 2005. This presentation will discuss post-delisting monitoring and management activities that have occurred since that time and suggest practical measures for improving the Service’s role in coordinating such post-delisting conservation efforts.