

Populations Module

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Populations Module

7.1. General Rules

7.1.1. What is the purpose of the Populations Module?

The Populations Module (POPS) in FIS was created to track the status and trends of native fish populations in the United States. The POPS Module is not intended to capture Fisheries Program activities, rather the intermediate and end outcomes that result from our activities (in the context of natural and anthropogenic factors). The POPS Module informs a number of Fisheries Program population-based performance measures (e.g., % self-sustaining fish populations) under the Fisheries Strategic Plan and the FWS Operational Plan. These measures also support goals and objective of the DOI strategic plan. Understanding which populations are in jeopardy assists in strategic planning and associated budget development.

7.1.2. What populations should be entered into the POPS Module?

Populations of Fisheries Program "Priority Species" must be entered into the Populations Module, with the exception of non-native species (which may be considered a Regional Priority Species due to recreational value). Additionally, any native species population within Fisheries Program "jurisdiction" should be described and entered in the POPS Module. **IMPORTANT:** Only populations of native species should be entered into the Populations Module.

NOTE: Non-native species/populations (species existing outside their native range) are typically managed by the Fisheries Program as either a recreational or an aquatic invasive species (AIS). Although the Fisheries Program conducts activities with these species, they are not tracked in the Populations Module (which tracks status and trends of native populations).

7.1.3. What constitutes a population?

In general, populations should be described at the same scale that assessments and management are conducted. For example, in some cases a population will be reproductively distinct and/or geographically isolated, and in other cases the population may be based on units otherwise defined in a recovery or management plan. The population may represent a variety of taxon (i.e., fish, birds, mollusks, arthropods, etc.) for which the Fisheries Program conducts management activities or should be conducting management activities.

Definition of a Population (For the purposes of the POPS Module): A discrete group of individuals of a single species, subspecies, or lesser taxon that is defined by its reproductive isolation and/or its geographical distribution (e.g., management unit).

Additional criteria for entering a new population:

- The population must be native and must exist, or have existed, in the wild. (Note: If the last remnant native population exists **only** in captivity, describe the wild population that the captive population represents).
- Populations or management units (such as hatchery strains) of non-native species managed for recreation/mitigation **should not be entered** into the POPS Module (purpose of the POPS Module is to track status and abundance of native populations).

7.1.4. Who enters new populations into POPS Module?

If you need to add a population to the POPS Module, consult your Regional FIS Coordinator. The Regional FIS Coordinator is responsible for maintaining current, relevant population information in the POPS Module for your Region.

7.1.5. How often should population information in the POPS Module be updated and who does it?

The POPS Module is designed and intended to be updated annually, at a minimum, or more frequently, as needed. Annual updates will consist of reviewing current population designations, addition of new populations, and updating information (i.e., status and trend) on populations already in the database. Field Stations are primarily responsible for the annual update of the POPS Module with Regional Office support. These updates/reviews can be made/conducted at any time throughout the year.

7.1.6. What are the roles and responsibilities for this module?

Field Stations:

- Entry of your Field Station's populations into the POPS Module
- Consult RO regarding new populations for POPS Module.
- Updating/revision of population information (i.e., status, trend, location, etc.) as new assessments are conducted and/or new population information becomes available.
- Annual QA/QC for your Field Station's populations.

Regional Office:

- Review, in consultation with Field Stations, new populations for entry into POPS Module.
- Coordinate review of populations that apply to more than one Region w/appropriate Regional FIS Coordinator(s)
- Overall QA/QC for the Region's populations.

7.2. Create a New Population

Before you create a new population be sure to consult with your [FIS regional coordinator](#). Compliance with this rule will help reduce duplicate population entry.

Note: If uncertain, the POPS Module provides a link to a decision tree to assist the Field and Regional offices in determining what constitutes a unique population for purposes of the FIS Populations Module. https://ecos.fws.gov/fis/Populations_Module_Dichotomous_Key.doc

7.2.1. Should I use a particular naming convention to describe the population?

Yes. If the population is identified in a fishery management or recovery plan, it is recommended to use the name from the plan. If the population is not included in a plan (i.e., a native, non-listed species w/out a management plan) then you will need to name the population.

When naming a new population that isn't referenced in an existing plan, use the water body (i.e., creek, stream, river, lake, etc.) and the species' common name. Here are some examples:

- Walla Walla River Spring Chinook
- Klickitat River core area Bull Trout
- Lewis Lake Lake Trout

7.2.2. What should a population description consist of?

The population description should consist of the geographic range of the population and other relevant information associated with the population (i.e., state, water bodies, genetics, land management agency, etc). You are encouraged to include links to scientifically credible information describing the population (e.g., natural heritage data for individual States found at <http://www.natureserve.org/visitLocal/index.jsp>).

7.2.3. What is a TESS Population?

TESS (Threatened and Endangered Species System) is the Service's Endangered Species Program's database of federally listed species, including Distinct Population Segments (DPS) and Ecologically Significant Units (ESU). The TESS database (http://ecos.fws.gov/tess_public/) is managed within the ECOS portal. The TESS database contains the Service's official, legal Endangered Species ACT (ESA) designations (i.e., 'threatened,' 'endangered,' and 'candidate') for listed species. ESUs and DPSs are considered "species" by the ESA.

For ESA listed species, should the POPS Module population name be the same as the TESS population (DPS or ESU), if one is shown?

ESUs and DPSs are considered "species" by the ESA. In FIS, DPSs and ESUs are included in the FIS Species List. In this case of DPSs and ESUs, therefore, the species name and population name will typically be the same (and will be identical to the TESS DPS or ESU name). However, if discrete management units *below* the DPS or ESU level are designated in the plan, these population units may be entered and tracked in the Populations Module.

For populations of listed species, the POPS Module requires entry of both a POPS Module population name and selection (via a drop-down list) of the corresponding TESS entity.

7.3. What is the Population Status and Trends Page?

This page tracks the status and trends of wild populations. The percentage of self-sustaining species (based on FAC's priority species) is the FAC Program's primary output measure, reported to the Department of Interior and to Congress.

NOTE: In all status and trends designations below, the "Description" or "Evidence" field should provide a reference (from a report, journal article, etc.) or brief description of the information upon which the designated trend is based. Be sure to include dates for supporting evidence.

7.3.1. What is "Assessment Status" and how do I determine the assessment status for the population?

The assessment status describes the quality or timeliness of assessment information relative to having the necessary data to adequately direct conservation actions to protect, conserve, and/or restore the population.

Current and Adequate: Includes assessments that are current, according to guidelines/schedules from approved plans (e.g. for plans that call for annual assessments, a "current" assessment would be one conducted in the past year). The assessment is "adequate" if it meets information needs or assessment guidelines from approved plans.

Current and Inadequate: While current, the assessment is inadequate in meeting information needs or assessment guidelines from approved plans.

Not Current, Historical Information Good: Includes assessments that are outdated, but for which historical assessment information is sound and adequate.

Not Current, Historical Information Poor: Includes assessments that are outdated and for which historic assessment data is limited or poor.

None: No population assessment information exists.

7.3.2. What is "Biological Status" and how do I determine the biological status of the population?

The biological status describes the population's overall status and assists in determining the need for conservation actions to protect, conserve, and/or restore the population. Many factors are taken into account when assessing the biological status of a species: not simply the number of individuals remaining, but the overall increase or decrease in the population over time, breeding success rates, known threats, and so on, as well as new threats and /or recent catastrophic events (i.e., wildfire, drought, flooding, etc.). **The status designation should be based on best professional judgment (and/or that of the relevant management entity, such as a Recovery Team).**

Depleted: A population whose abundance or distribution (or other appropriate measure) is below its management goals, or, in the absence of management goals, population abundance or distribution considered to be below historical levels.

Self-sustaining: Capable of maintaining itself independently (Webster's New World Dictionary, Third College Edition, as referenced in Fisheries Program Vision for the Future). In general, a population may be considered self-sustaining if it is sufficient in three areas: size, structure, and distribution, such that it is capable of maintaining itself via natural reproduction.

Extirpated: Locally extinct. Not located despite intensive searches of historical sites and other appropriate habitat and virtually no likelihood that it will be rediscovered.

Unknown: Insufficient data available to determine status.

7.3.3. What is "Population Trend" and how do I determine the trend of a population?

The population trend captures changes in population abundance and/or distribution (as reflected in population age structure, genetic structure, etc.) over time.

Declining – Based on current and adequate assessment information, or in the absence of current assessment information, based on historical information, the population is documented as decreasing, going from "better to worse," becoming less or smaller—the opposite of increasing.

Stable - Based on current and adequate assessment information, or in the absence of current assessment information, based on historical information, the population is neither increasing nor decreasing.

Increasing - Based on current and adequate assessment information, or in the absence of current assessment information, based on historical information, the population is increasing in abundance and/or distribution.

Unknown - Indicates inadequate information exists upon which to determine the population trend.

7.3.4. What is the "Listing Status" field?

The listing status field provides a current list of all species (including DPS's / ESU's) that are listed by the FWS under the ESA from the Threatened and Endangered Species System (TESS) database. Choose the ESA-listed species (or ESU or DPS) that is associated with your population (as relevant).

7.4. Location and Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC)

7.4.1. What HUC resolution should I reference?

When entering the location of a population, it is preferred to designate the lowest HUC scale (the 8-digit watershed unit). If a larger scale is designated, it will be assumed that the population is found in all units below (i.e., Accounting Unit Code, Sub-region, and Region). If you don't know the numerical HUC designation for your population, please refer to the "Watershed Locator Tools", located in the Location – Hydrologic Unit Code channel of the POPS Module, to help you with identification.

7.5 Upload a Document Page

7.5.1. What kind of documents should be uploaded for the population?

You may upload any document that provides relevant information in support of status and trend information presented or documents that present related information (population goals and objective, etc.).

7.6. Edit an Existing Population

The list of populations in FIS are connected with the “owning” field office (the field office in which the “population expert” resides). The populations displayed for editing are limited to those populations which are owned by the office of the current user.

To edit an existing population, first choose that population from the drop-down list of populations associated with your office.

NOTE: If the population is not on your list, conduct a search for the population in the FIS Reports Module to determine if the population is already in FIS, but is “owned” by another field office. If another field office “owns” this population (i.e., acts as the population expert), contact that person with any requests to change / update population information. If the population is not in FIS, contact your RO FIS Coordinator to add.

Once you have selected a population from your list you will be taken to the population home page. From the home page you may edit the details, status, trend, and location information previously entered for the population. Follow the instructions in sections 7.2 through 7.4 (above).