



Karner Blue Butterfly Habitat Conservation Plan: Questions and Answers



What are incidental take permits and habitat conservation plans?

When a non-Federal land manager plans an activity that may inadvertently "take" (harass, harm or kill) a federally threatened or endangered species, that land manager must apply to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for an *incidental take permit*. The incidental take permit application must be accompanied by a *habitat conservation plan* (HCP) that outlines a conservation program for avoiding, minimizing, mitigating and monitoring the take. An incidental take permit allows take at levels that do not threaten the long-term survival and recovery of the species. Intentional take (e.g., collection, hunting, intentional habitat destruction) is never allowed.



Karner blue males on butterfly weed

What is "take"?

"Take" is defined in the Endangered Species Act as harassing, harming, pursuing, hunting, shooting, wounding, killing, trapping, capturing, or collecting a threatened or endangered species. Harm includes habitat destruction or degradation that impairs essential behavioral patterns such as breeding, feeding, or sheltering.

Why is the Wisconsin Karner Blue HCP a statewide program?

Because Karner blues are distributed across such a large area of Wisconsin, and because there are so many landowners in the Karner blue range, the HCP and associated incidental take permit were designed to cover

the entire state. A statewide HCP requires only one permit application (in lieu of many separate applications) and provides for a landscape conservation approach. HCP conservation activities focus on the central and northwest parts of Wisconsin, where the wild lupine plant supports the Karner blue.

If I have wild lupine on my property, do I have to participate in the HCP?

Not necessarily. Land managers in the Karner blue range whose activities include: 1) permanent habitat destruction (e.g., roadway or subdivision construction), 2) right-of-way management, or 3) commercial forestry on more than 1,000 acres need to apply for an incidental take permit. In general, the easiest and least expensive way for these land managers to obtain incidental take permit coverage is to become a partner in the HCP. Land managers who are HCP partners, include utility companies, road managers, commercial foresters, county forest managers and others.

Small private landowners, farmers, and foresters with less than 1000 acres generally do *not* need to apply for an incidental take permit. They are automatically covered by the statewide permit and may participate in Karner blue conservation voluntarily. Landowners in this voluntary participation group generally face no legal penalties if they choose not to participate. [The 3-Year Participation Strategy Review Report](#) highlights the achievements of this voluntary participation group.

Contact the HCP Coordinator at the Wisconsin DNR (608-261-6451) for detailed participation opportunities.



Del Monte staff people monitor a lupine seed production plot

If I'm not required to participate in the HCP, can I still help the Karner blue?

If you own land in the Karner blue range, you can do a few things to create and maintain butterfly habitat on your property. These activities may include brush clearing, planting of lupine and nectar species, and invasive species control.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has a program that provides technical and monetary assistance to private landowners who would like to help conserve the butterfly on their property. For more information on this landowner assistance program, call the FWS at 608-221-1206, ext. 21, and read the FWS fact sheet on Restoring Habitat for the Karner Blue Butterfly on Private Lands in Wisconsin. More information is available on the [Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program](http://midwest.fws.gov/WisconsinPartners/butterfly.html) website at <http://midwest.fws.gov/WisconsinPartners/butterfly.html>. The DNR fact sheet on [Growing Wild Lupine](#) offers some technical advice.

If you live in the Karner blue range, chances are good that HCP partners and participants manage land in your county. You may be able to assist an HCP partner with their conservation efforts. Check the online [HCP partner list](#) for participating land managers in your area. You can also help by talking to other landowners and educators about Karner blue conservation.



Karner blue female on goldenrod

What effect will the HCP have on existing management practices on partner lands?

The HCP allows land managers to continue land management (e.g., forestry, roadway and corridor maintenance) in and around Karner blue habitat, provided they modify their activities to minimize negative impacts on Karner blues and their habitat. Karner blue conservation is not incompatible with land uses in central and northwestern Wisconsin. In fact, long-term maintenance of Karner blue habitat requires the types of periodic clearing (e.g., mowing and logging) that are common in Wisconsin's Karner blue range.

HCP partners employ several techniques to protect Karner blues and their habitat. These include: timing of mowing and herbicide applications to protect summer-flowering lupine and nectar plants, creation of dispersal corridors between Karner blue-occupied sites, and maintenance of "shifting mosaics" on forest land. Shifting mosaics are arrangements of forest parcels, logged on a rotating basis to maintain Karner blue habitat.

Permanent take (e.g., road or subdivision construction on Karner blue-occupied land) requires a mitigation plan to avoid or minimize take and recreate Karner blue habitat elsewhere.

Why is the Karner blue butterfly so important?

Frequently, species become endangered because their habitats are diminished or degraded. The Karner blue butterfly is no exception. The Karner blue needs open oak savannas and pine barrens to live, and these ecosystems have become increasingly rare in its natural range. Central and northwestern Wisconsin contains much of the Karner blue's last remaining habitat.

By protecting the Karner blue, we are protecting imperiled grassland ecosystems and many other rare species that depend on them, including the Kirtland's warbler, slender glass lizard, eastern massasauga rattlesnake, wood turtle, powesheik skipper, regal fritillary, yellow gentian and Hill's thistle. Ecosystem conservation helps maintain biological diversity and stable, resilient landscapes.

Photo credits: Cathy Bleser, Thomas Meyer, Ursula Petersen