



# National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

## Executive Summary for the American Oystercatcher Business Plan

October 26, 2008



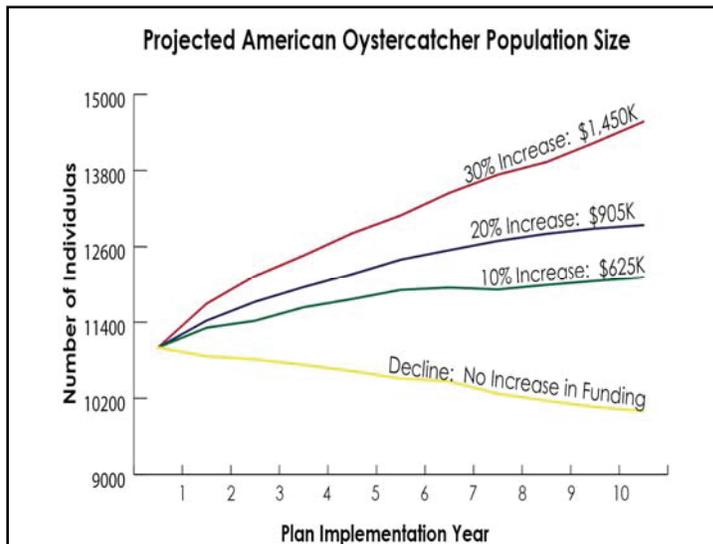
# Colorado Native Fishes — Upper Green River Business Plan

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## Executive Summary

**Conservation need:** American Oystercatchers are large shorebirds that inhabit coastal salt marshes and mudflats along the mid-Atlantic and southeastern U.S., including the Gulf coast. The species is projected to decrease by at least 12% during the next decade, taking their current population of about 11,000 to below 9,700. The birds are believed to have declined about 50% since the early 1800's. American Oystercatchers are classified as a species of high conservation concern by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and continued declines will result in pressure to petition the oystercatcher as federally Threatened or Endangered.

**Performance targets:** A new investment of \$14.5 million over 10 years would result in a projected 30% increase in oystercatcher numbers, or a 42% marginal gain. A 20% increase in numbers is the projected benefit from a \$9 million/10 year investment and a 10% increase is possible with a \$6.2million/10 year commitment. About 1/10 of the total funding is needed each year of the 10-year initiative.



**Key partners:** The American Oystercatcher Working Group, which includes a broad array of federal and state agencies, conservation groups, and academics, is the facilitating body for this business plan. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and state agencies (particularly the states between Virginia and Florida) provide key land bases within which oystercatchers nest. Most of the work of involving reduction of human and predator impacts will be implemented and overseen by state and federal agencies and conservation organizations.

**Major threats include:**

loss of habitat from coastal development; disturbance to the birds by human recreational activities, particularly during the nesting season; elevated predation on eggs and young by raccoons, cats, and other mammals whose numbers have increased as a result of human activities and land use changes; contamination of food sources by pollution; and sea-level rise from climate change.

**Implementation plan, key strategies, and annual budget:**

NFWF proposes five key strategies to reverse declines and create sustainable populations:

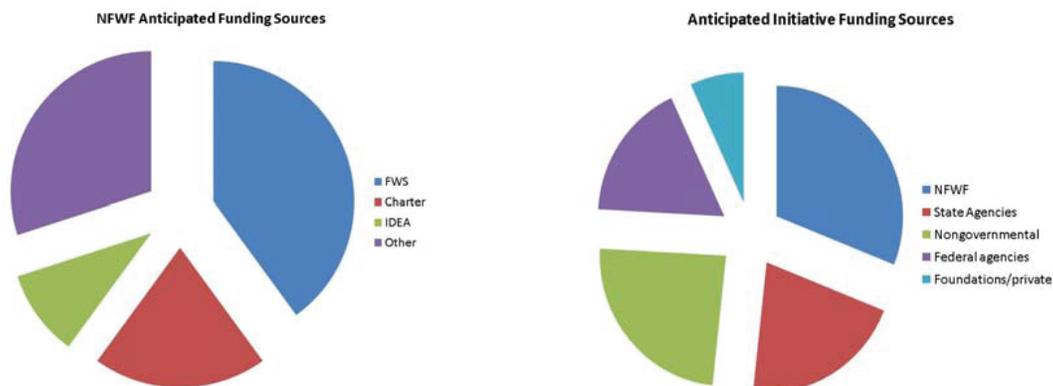
- Control predators such as raccoons, feral cats, red fox, and other mammals to increase reproductive output - \$340,000 annually.
- Reduce disturbance by humans through public education, outreach, and enforcement of restricted areas - \$300,000 annually.
- Refine population assessment and monitoring to better measure success of conservation actions - \$380,000 annually.
- Reduce gaps in knowledge about factors contributing to declines through research - \$350,000 annually.
- Protect and better manage key habitats - \$80,000 annually.

**Significant Ancillary Benefits:**

More than a dozen species of coastal beach-dwelling and marsh birds will benefit, including Piping Plover, Wilson’s Plover, and other imperiled shorebirds; Black Skimmer; Least Terns; and Mottled Ducks, as will nesting sea turtles.

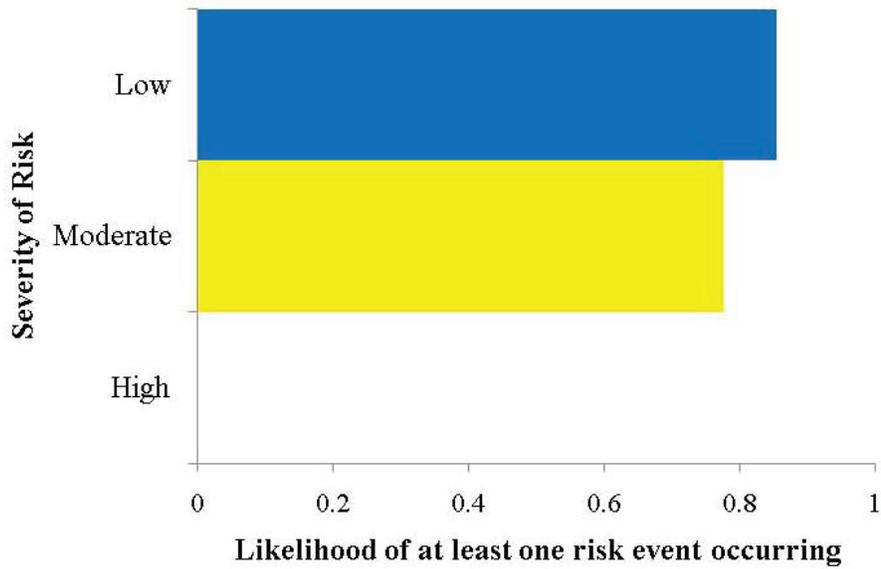
**NFWF Financial Leadership:**

NFWF will need to provide about 1/3 of annual costs, or about \$450,000. Federal appropriations are expected to be about \$300,000 annually. NFWF has several Charters and IDEA funds that are anticipated to provide \$125,000 annually.



**Risk:**

The largest risk for this initiative is from environmental factors such as rising sea level. In high density nesting areas in VA, NC, and SC, approximately two-thirds of oystercatcher nesting beaches would be inundated by a 1 m sea level rise. However, oystercatchers appear to be somewhat adaptive in their use nesting sites, so sea level rise and the resulting loss of existing habitat may not be as severe as it will be for other species. We believe financial risk is also important—that is, our collective inability to raise necessary funds for key projects. Social factors, such as increased use of coastal areas by humans, is also an important risk.



# LOGIC FRAMEWORK -- American Oystercatcher Conservation Initiative

