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Following a lawsuit from the Center for Biological Diversity, the federal government has issued a recovery plan for Santa Barbara County's California tiger salamander, which is expected to restore the species' population by 2045. PHOTO COURTESY OF U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

The U.S. government is saying "I'm sorry" to endangered California tiger salamanders, and—in true federal-government-apology fashion—returning a bunch of land to them.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service approved a final recovery plan for Santa Barbara County's population of the salamander on Dec. 12, requiring the purchase and preservation of 34,000 acres of habitat.

Federal government recommends preservation of 34,000 acres for tiger salamander

The plan calls for the restoration and permanent protection of salamanders' breeding ponds and adjacent uplands through conservation easements and land acquisitions.

The salamander has been protected under the Endangered Species Act for more than a decade, though this is the first time the Fish and Wildlife Service has released a recovery plan for the animal. It's expected to cost more than \$181 million.

Jenny Loda, a biologist and attorney with the Center for Biological Diversity, said in a press release that the plan gives hope for the future of the species.

"With a recovery plan, we can fight threats like habitat destruction that have pushed these salamanders to the brink of extinction," Loda said in the release. The plan prioritizes seven major points to help restore the California tiger salamander's population in Santa Barbara County:

- Protect and manage habitat.
- Restore and maintain habitat, reduce vehicle-strike mortalities, and reduce barriers to dispersal.
- Reduce and remove threats from non-native species.
- Prevent and reduce the potential for disease transmission.
- Conduct research on threats.
- Support development and implementation of management and monitoring plans.
- Foster collaboration and cooperation with public through education, outreach, and regular meetings.

Fish and Wildlife predicts that if the plan is implemented properly, the salamander population should be restored by 2045.