

Recovery of the Columbia Basin pygmy rabbit in Washington State, USA

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The Columbia Basin pygmy rabbit (*Brachylagus idahoensis*) was emergency listed as a federal endangered species in 2001, after sudden population decline. Less than 30 individuals remain in the wild, and a captive breeding program has been initiated to assist with recovery. The Columbia Basin population of pygmy rabbits is genetically distinct from all other populations of pygmy rabbits in the United States, and appears to have suffered from a reduction in genetic diversity over the past 50 years. Captive breeding was initiated with 18 individuals; 15 offspring were born in 2002, and 14 offspring were born in 2003. The captive population has been affected by avian tuberculosis (*Mycobacterium avium*) and coccidiosis (*Coccidia spp.*), and subsequent loss of genetic diversity. Recovery actions under consideration include the introduction of genetic material from Great Basin pygmy rabbits through captive breeding and direct augmentation of wild populations.