

HOME ON THE RANGE

RETURN OF THE

**BLACK-FOOTED**

**FERRET**



BLACK  
FOOTED  
FERRET  
FRIENDS





The black-footed ferret (BFF) is a native of the North America prairie in 12 western states, Mexico, and Canada. One of the most endangered mammals on the continent, BFFs are usually solitary and nocturnal, spending most of their lives in the burrows of prairie dogs. BFFs were thought to be extinct by 1981, but many conservation-minded partners are working to reintroduce populations of the species across its former range.



### SURVIVAL DEPENDS ON

#### Prairie dogs

90% of black-footed ferret diet is prairie dog

#### Large landscapes

1,500 to 3,000+ acres of purposefully managed prairie dog colonies are needed for a sustainable BFF population. 500,000 total acres (10 percent of currently existing habitat) to support a recovered population of 3,000 adult BFF in the wild.

#### Landowner Cooperation

Disease management  
sites managed to reduce sylvatic plague

## THE BLACK-FOOTED FERRET FRIENDS AND RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION TEAM

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The Black-Footed Ferret Friends (Friends) are private partners interested in the conservation of prairie wildlife, in particular the BFF. Members include representatives from the private sector including livestock producers, the wildlife conservation community and Native American Tribes. The Friends focus on supporting BFF recovery by encouraging practical wildlife management efforts that are compatible with agriculture and other business operations.

**BFF Friends Mission Statement:** Promote voluntary incentive based, black-footed ferret recovery with measurable conservation goals through advocacy, outreach and seeking private and public funding to support BFF recovery efforts.


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The BFF Friends are members of the Black-Footed Ferret Recovery Implementation Team (BFF RIT), created in 1996 to integrate the expertise and resources of various partners contributing to recovery of the BFF.

BFF RIT is a multi-agency conservation effort led by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and includes representatives from federal, state and tribal governments, zoos, private landowners and nonprofit organizations.

Although the role of BFF RIT is strictly advisory in nature, many team members are hands-on participants in captive breeding, reintroduction and population monitoring efforts.



A close-up photograph of two black-footed ferrets peering out from a sandy burrow. The ferret on the left is looking slightly to the left, while the one on the right is looking directly at the camera. Both have dark brown and black facial markings on a lighter brown body. The background is a soft-focus, sandy environment.

## LONG TERM SURVIVAL

### Removal from the Endangered Species List Next Steps

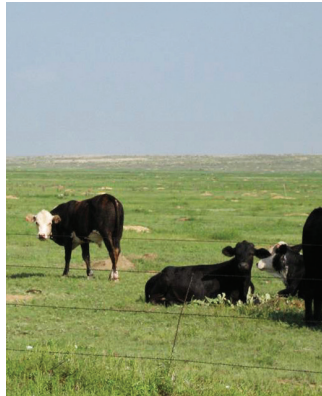
- Continuation of captive breeding program and release of BFFs at selected field locations until 3,000 adult wild-born animals are distributed across the species' historical range.
- Ensure landowners' and other stakeholders' are accommodated at these special places by maintaining voluntary participation and providing regulatory flexibility, and financial compensation.
- Develop partnerships to support BFFs by purposefully managing 500,000 acres of prairie dog habitat, less than 10% of currently existing habitat.
- Protect BFFs and their prairie dog prey from disease, primarily sylvatic plague, at these purposely managed locations.



## BENEFITS OF FERRET RECOVERY

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- Many of the animals that live in the same places where BFFs live, including the mountain plover, burrowing owl, swift fox, ferruginous hawk, prairie dog, and others, also benefit from ferret habitat conservation efforts.
- Ranchers who tolerate prairie dogs to support BFFs on a portion of their land may receive financial compensation to offset livestock forage losses and be relieved of some pest control costs.
- BFF conservation efforts designed to be harmonious with livestock management goals can provide an example for other endangered species recovery programs.



## MODEL FOR FUTURE SPECIES CONSERVATION

Instead of a contentious, top down regulatory approach, the Black- Footed Ferret Recovery Plan emphasizes incentives to attract landowner participation. Regulatory provisions are few, clear and fair, and participation is strictly voluntary. Determining recovery and the ultimate success of the program is based on specific, easily measurable goals.

“This new initiative gives landowners the assurances and assistance they need to confidently engage in black-footed ferret recovery without compromising their ranching and farming livelihoods.”  
- Terry Frankhauser, Executive Vice President  
Colorado Cattelman’s Association



## A CHOICE TO FIGHT OR WIN

Efforts to conserve the BFF must start with an insistence that the needs of wildlife must accommodate the interests of the people living on the same landscapes. This obvious fact may be debated by various interest groups, but it is a political reality born of the give and take of our democratic system. The Friends are confident that BFF recovery and the benefits that it can provide can be achieved with modest investment. BFF recovery has its challenges, but they can be overcome, with significant long term benefits for a variety of wildlife species as well as the people who live and work on the land that BFFs share.

The Friends believe the best interests of our country can be served by balancing the maintenance of human livelihoods with wildlife conservation through landowner incentive-based programs with regulations that are few, clear, and fair, rather than fighting for years over heavy-handed regulatory approaches. With increased federal funding to support state and private sector efforts, BFF recovery can be achieved in ten years or less with all affected parties winning, demonstrating the value of incentive-based conservation. Would parties affected positively, or potentially negatively, by the future of wildlife conservation choices rather fight or win?

A black-footed ferret is the central focus of the lower half of the image, sitting upright in a field of tall, golden-brown grass. The background is a soft-focus landscape of rolling hills under a warm, golden sunset sky. The ferret has dark fur with characteristic white markings on its face and chest.

For more information visit

[www.blackfootedferret.org](http://www.blackfootedferret.org)