

Utah Prairie Dog Threatened by Utah Land Development

The Utah Prairie Dog is one species of animal that one may not think would have population problems, seeing that most "rodent" type animals have some of the biggest litters out of most mammalian creatures. But one subspecies that is endemic to Utah, aptly named the Utah Prairie Dog, has come under strain that last few decades. Some attribute this to disease and naturally occurring population culling, but biologists are finding that farm poisonings and Utah land development has created some issues too. Recently the population count has come in with very low numbers -- around 5,000 individuals. They exist in colonies underground. Their livelihood is underground, like most prairie dogs. This is their way of protecting themselves from natural predators and is a way of storing food and hibernating during the winter. Since European settlement brought human populations over to the Utah area, poisoning campaigns and development have impinged on their population growth, usually because they are thought to create problems with cows and farming. They do pose some problems when it comes to human land use and cattle raising. They will feed on the same grasses that cows eat and have been known to overpopulate a given section of desired land that is to be used for development. However since this species has shown declining numbers, wildlife biologists and state politicians have sought protection measures. Safe Harbor, and Coexistence as an Answer So there are both extremes to the answer. You have those who believe that Utah land development should not be allowed to reach such areas that should be set aside for the species, and you have those who believe that their population is not important enough in the wake of local economy and land usage. Most biologists would agree that either side may not be realistic due to the repercussions that occur and that a medium should be found between the two. So what many land owners and biologists have devised is some kind way to both support the species while development can also proceed. One type of resolution is the safe harbor agreement. The Utah Prairie dog safe harbor agreement was launched in 1998 with a few ranchers around the state. With it comes an agreement that land owners will agree to have a set level of prairie dogs, while being compensated for their efforts to preserve the populations. This was a revolutionary pact and has come to an agreeable table presently.

About the Author

Cypress Financial (<http://www.cypressfinancial.cc>) helps Utah Land development grow by assisting developers with loans and locating development opportunities. They provide risk assessment as well to make sure the land investment is a sound one. The author, Art Gib, is a freelance writer.

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