

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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News Release



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FINAL RECOVERY PLAN PUBLISHED FOR SHOWY STICKSEED, AN EXTREMELY RARE WASHINGTON STATE PLANT

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) announced the publication in today's *Federal Register* of the final recovery plan for Showy Stickseed (*Hackelia venusta*), one of the rarest plants in Washington State. The Service added Showy Stickseed to the federal List of Endangered and Threatened Plants on February 6, 2002. Critical habitat has not been designated for this species.

The final recovery plan describes specific criteria and actions needed to recover Showy Stickseed and reduce the threats such that the species is no longer in danger of extinction. Among the plan's recommendations is a call for developing partnerships with the U.S. Forest Service, Washington Department of Transportation, the Washington Department of Natural Resources, botanical gardens, academic institutions and non-governmental organizations to effectively conserve and enhance the species and its habitat.

"It is only with the dedication of our partners that this extremely rare and endangered plant will be recovered" said Susan Martin, Supervisor of the Service's Upper Columbia Fish and Wildlife Office. "Partnerships are the backbone of our recovery efforts."

Showy Stickseed is in the forget-me-not family and has large attractive white or whitish-blue flowers. The species is native to Chelan County, Washington, where it is found in open areas of steeply sloping, highly unstable sand and granite cliffs. Only a single population of about 600 plants is known to exist, occurring primarily on federal lands near the city of Leavenworth, in Washington State. A very small portion of the population is located on private lands.

The primary threats to showy stickseed include collection and physical disturbance to the plants and habitat by humans; landslides; nonnative noxious weeds; competition and shading from native trees and shrubs due to fire suppression; some highway maintenance activities; low seedling establishment; and the small size and restricted distribution of the single population of the species, which makes it vulnerable to extinction from chance natural or human-caused events.

The goal of the Endangered Species Act is to recover listed species to the point where they are secure, self-sustaining members of their ecosystems and no longer need federal protection. A

recovery plan is a blueprint providing guidance for actions by federal, state and other public agencies and private interests that will lead to recovery through downlisting or delisting a species. Recovery plans are advisory only. They do not obligate the expenditure of funds or require that the recommended actions be implemented.

The Showy Stickseed final recovery plan was developed by Service biologists in cooperation with botanists, plant ecologists, and planners from the U.S. Forest Service, the Washington Department of Natural Resource's Natural Heritage Programs, and non-governmental organizations. The plan lines out immediate actions to stabilize the existing population and increase population size and numbers across the estimated historical range of the species.

These actions include maintaining the current geographic distribution of the species and either finding additional populations or establishing additional populations within the estimated historical range of the species in Tumwater Canyon. The need for multiple populations to avoid extinction of the species through the elimination of a single population in a chance catastrophic event is one of the fundamental tenets of conservation biology.

The plan also calls for providing habitat management to maintain an open habitat, minimizing the damage of collection and trampling within the population, and seed collection and long-term seed banking to protect the genetic resources of the species. The development and implementation of management plans by the agencies involved, and a monitoring plan to assess trends, are also important recommendations of this recovery plan.

A draft recovery plan was released for a 60-day public comment period on March 13, 2006, after which comments were considered and incorporated. The final plan may be viewed and downloaded in full from the internet at:

<http://www.fws.gov/pacific/ecoservices/endangered/recovery/plans.html>.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 97-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 548 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

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