



News Release

Pacific Islands External Affairs Office

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Public Comment Period for Hawaiian Picture-wing Flies Revised Critical Habitat Proposal Reopens

Public Hearings Planned for O'ahu and the Big Island

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is providing an additional opportunity for the public to submit comments regarding the proposal to designate 9,238 acres of critical habitat for 12 endangered Hawaiian picture-wing flies on the islands of O'ahu, Hawai'i, Maui, Moloka'i, and Kaua'i. The new comment period – the second since the proposal was published on November 28, 2007 – will end on April 25.

“During the previous public comment period, we received requests to hold public hearings,” said Patrick Leonard, field supervisor for the Fish and Wildlife Office in the Pacific Islands. “This additional comment period will allow us to conduct those public hearings and provide interested individuals or groups more time to learn about the proposal and comment.”

Interested parties are invited to attend the public hearings, which will be held on the Big Island and O'ahu. The Big Island hearing will be held on April 8 at the Hilo Hawaiian Hotel, Mala Ikena Room, 71 Banyan Drive, in Hilo. The O'ahu hearing will be held in Waikiki on April 10 at the Queen Kapiolani Hotel, Queen's Room, 2nd Floor, 150 Kapahulu Avenue in Honolulu. An informational session from 5:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. will precede each public hearing. Public hearings will be conducted from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Those species for which critical habitat is proposed are: *Drosophila aglaia*, *Drosophila hemipeza*, *Drosophila montgomeryi*, *Drosophila obatai*, *Drosophila substenoptera*, and *Drosophila tarphytrichia* (found on O'ahu); *Drosophila heteroneura*, *Drosophila ochrobasis*, and *Drosophila mulli* (found on Hawai'i); *Drosophila musaphilia* (found on Kaua'i); *Drosophila neoclavisetae* (found on Maui); and *Drosophila differens* (found on Moloka'i).

Nearly half (47%) of the proposed critical habitat is on federal lands and includes 3,604 acres in the Kona Forest Unit of Hakalau Forest National Wildlife Refuge and 752 acres in Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park. State lands comprise 26 percent, or 2,330 acres, of the proposed critical habitat, while 1 percent, or 128 acres, are on City and County of Honolulu land, and 26 percent, or 2,424 acres, are on private land.

The designation of critical habitat does not affect land ownership or establish a refuge, wilderness, reserve, preserve, or other special conservation area. It does not allow government or public access to private lands. However, projects using federal funds that may affect critical

habitat are required to consult with the Service to ensure their actions do not adversely modify or destroy designated critical habitat.

Critical habitat has the potential to be protected through cooperative measures under the Endangered Species Act, including habitat conservation plans, safe harbor agreements, candidate conservation agreements and state programs. In addition, voluntary partnership programs such as the Service's partners for fish and wildlife program assist in restoring habitat. Habitat for listed species is provided on many of the Service's National Wildlife Refuges, and state wildlife management areas.

The Service will consider comments from all interested parties received by April 25, 2008. Comments can be sent by one of the following methods:

- *Federal eRulemaking Portal* at <http://www.regulations.gov> . Follow the instructions for submitting comments.
- Via U.S. mail or hand delivery to Public Comments Processing, Attn: RIN 1018-AU93; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 222, Arlington, VA 22203.

Copies of the proposed rule may be downloaded from the Service's website at <http://www.fws.gov/pacificislands/>. For further information contact: Patrick Leonard, Field Supervisor, Pacific Islands Fish and Wildlife Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 300 Ala Moana Boulevard, Room 3-122, Box 50088, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96850; telephone 808 792 9400 or fax 808 792 9581.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov.