

BLACK-TAILED PRAIRIE DOG
(*Cynomys ludovicianus*)

STATUS: Species of Concern

SPECIES DESCRIPTION: Prairie dogs are small, stout ground squirrels. The total length of an adult black-tailed prairie dog is approximately 14–17 inches; weight is from 1 to 3 pounds. Individual appearances within the species vary in mixed colors of brown, black, gray, and white. The black-tipped tail is characteristic.

HABITAT: Extensive, deep, and permanent burrows in plains and desert grasslands with heavier soils, around 5,000 feet in elevation. Black-tailed prairie dogs are diurnal, burrowing animals and spend most of the day above ground.

RANGE: Current: Species extirpated from Arizona around 1960. A reestablishment attempt was made in 1972 but failed.

Potential: Black-tailed prairie dogs had the most extensive range of all the species of prairie dogs and probably occupied more area than all other species combined (Hoogland 1995). The U.S. Geological Survey estimated that the black-tailed prairie dog may occupy less than 0.5 percent of its original range and has experienced an estimated 98 percent decline in population abundance throughout North America (Mac *et al.* 1998). It notes that the amount of occupied habitat has declined from approximately 100 million ac in the late 1800s to about 1.8 million ac at present; a decline of around 99 percent. Certain areas within historical range in Arizona could probably support this species.

REASONS FOR DECLINE / VULNERABILITY: Threats to this species include habitat loss and fragmentation; shooting; plague and other diseases; conversion of grassland to cropland; urbanization; change in vegetative communities, and poisoning.

LAND MANAGEMENT / OWNERSHIP: None in Arizona.

NOTES: Species removed from candidate list in August 2004 [69 FR 51217].