



News Release

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ARIZONA AGAVE REMOVED FROM ENDANGERED SPECIES LIST

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has removed the Arizona agave from the list of threatened and endangered species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) because it has been determined to be a hybrid of two other agave species.

Controlled experiments on the reproductive limitations of the Arizona agave conducted at the Desert Botanical Garden in Phoenix confirmed that the plant is a hybrid. The plant – found only where the range of Toumey’s agave (*A. toumeyana* var. *bella*) and the golden-flowered agave (*A. chrysantha*) overlap – is a hybrid of the two parent-species. Neither of the parent species are listed under the ESA.

Hybrid plants are not eligible for protection under the ESA. The Arizona agave will continue to receive protection under Arizona’s Native Plant law, which requires a permit to remove plants from the wild or to sell them.

The plant was first described in 1970 as a unique species (*Agave arizonica*) from specimens collected in the New River Mountains of central Arizona. The Arizona agave, a succulent plant that is 8 to 14-inches in diameter and 12 to 16-inches tall, sprouts a flower stalk that can grow up to 13 feet tall. Fewer than 100 plants are known in the wild, all in Gila, Yavapai and Maricopa counties on the Tonto National Forest and private land in chaparral and juniper grasslands.

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 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 545 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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NOTE TO EDITORS: Arizona agave photograph is available on the Internet at <http://arizonaes.fws.gov>.