



# News Release

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**Southwest Region (Arizona • New Mexico • Oklahoma • Texas) <http://southwest.fws.gov>**

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## **Public Hearing Scheduled on Cactus Ferruginous Pygmy-owl's Endangered Status**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will hold a public hearing to listen to comments on its proposal to remove the cactus ferruginous pygmy-owl from the list of endangered species in response to a Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals' opinion. Oral or written comments will be accepted during the hearing.

The hearing will be held Tuesday, September 20, from 6:30 to 9 p.m. at the Tucson Convention Center, Apache – Greenlee meeting rooms, 260 South Church Avenue in Tucson.

Cactus ferruginous pygmy-owls are found throughout Mexico's west coast states and a portion of its east coast and into Texas. When the Service listed the owl as endangered in 1997, it listed only the Arizona owls as a distinct population segment. The decision was litigated and the Court determined that the owl's endangered status was not supported by a demonstration of biological and ecological 'significance.'

The Service has been ordered by the court to explain its rationale for finding that the Arizona owls are a discrete population that is significant to the whole subspecies. It seeks information on the following:

- Persistence of the distinct population segment in an ecological setting unusual or unique for the taxon.
- Evidence that loss of the distinct population segment would result in a significant gap in the range of the taxon.
- Evidence that the distinct population segment represents the only surviving natural occurrence of a taxon that may be more abundant elsewhere as an introduced population outside of its historic range, or
- Evidence that the distinct population segment differs markedly from other populations of the species in its genetic characteristics.

Comments may also be mailed to the Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Arizona Ecological Services Field Office, 2321 West Royal Palm Road, Suite 103, Phoenix, Arizona 85021-4951 or by facsimile to 602/242-2513. Electronic comments can be submitted to: [http://cfpo\\_comments@fws.gov](mailto:http://cfpo_comments@fws.gov). The deadline for all comments is October 3, 2005.

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 544 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 63 Fish and Wildlife Management 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 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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*Maps, photos and other information about the pygmy-owl are available at <http://arizonaes.fws.gov>.*