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# News Release



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For Immediate Release

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## **U.S. Fish & Wildlife Publishes Recovery Plan for Rare Yreka Plant** *Federal officials optimistic that Yreka phlox can recover*

A recovery plan for the endangered Yreka phlox (*Phlox hirsuta*) was published in today's *Federal Register*, outlining actions that will be implemented towards the recovery of one of California's rarest plants.

Yreka phlox was listed as an endangered species on February 3, 2000, and is known to occur at only five locations in the vicinity of Yreka, California. The low-growing, bright rose-pink to white flowered perennial faces a high degree of threat, but also a high potential for recovery.

"Implementation of this recovery plan will hopefully not only lead to the reclassification of Yreka phlox to a threatened species, but lead to the removal of this plant from the list of endangered species all together," said Nadine Kanim, Biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Yreka. "More than a dozen partners have come together in support of the recovery of this rare California native. Their commitment to the recovery effort has been remarkable and worthwhile."

Yreka phlox grows from 2 to 6 inches in height on serpentine slopes. Serpentine, California's official state rock, is an unusual rock that breaks down into soils that are high in magnesium and iron, and low in calcium and other nutrients. This mixture is toxic to most plants, but has produced more than 200 unique California native plants. Often confused with other similar phlox species found in the area, Yreka phlox can be distinguished by its hairy stems and foliage.

Threats to Yreka phlox addressed in the recovery plan include alteration or destruction of habitat resulting from residential development, logging, fire suppression activities, off-road vehicle use, theft, and vandalism; competition with exotic plants; herbicide application; domestic animal grazing; inadequate existing regulatory mechanisms; and potential extirpation as a result of random events.

Recovery Team members, including the City of Yreka, the Siskiyou County Planning Department, Fruit Growers Supply Company, Timber Products Company, other private landowners, and botanists from universities and state and federal agencies, have made significant contributions to the development of the recovery plan and recovery efforts.

Recovery actions include:

- Protect and secure the four occurrences of Yreka phlox known as of January 1, 2002: China Hill, Soap Creek Ridge, Jackson Street, and Cracker Gulch occurrences. Alternatively, the China Hill and Soap Creek Ridge occurrences are protected, and substitutes representing Jackson Street and/or Cracker Gulch are protected.

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- Develop and implement a monitoring strategy for all occurrences that will identify existing and new threats over a period of at least 10 years. Implement a management plan at each protected site to ensure the long-term persistence of Yreka phlox.
- Create and maintain a seed bank and develop propagation techniques in case of unforeseen future population losses.
- Survey for undiscovered occurrences in unsurveyed areas likely to support Yreka phlox.
- Conduct biological research to guide recovery and conservation efforts.
- Enhance public awareness, understanding, and participation in Yreka phlox recovery.

Native plants are important for their ecological, economic, and aesthetic values, but most notably for their role in the development of crops that resist disease, insects, and drought, and medicines. At least 25 percent of prescription drugs contain ingredients derived from plant compounds, including medicine used to treat cancer, heart disease, juvenile leukemia, and malaria, as well as those used to assist organ transplant recipients. Plants are also used to develop natural pesticides.

The Endangered Species Act does not prohibit "take" of listed plants on private land, but landowners must comply with state laws protecting imperiled plants and California state law prohibits the taking of protected plants. Consultations with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service come into play for private and other non-Federal landowners only when Federal funding or permits are required for activities that may affect listed species.

For more information or copies of the recovery plan for the Yreka phlox, write to Phil Detrich, Field Supervisor, Yreka Fish and Wildlife Office, 1829 S. Oregon Street, Yreka, California, 96097, or call Nadine Kanim at (530) 842-5763.

*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 fishery resource 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 Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to State fish and wildlife agencies.*

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