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# News Release



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## **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Proposes Revision of Critical Habitat for Spreading Navarretia Plant**

Carlsbad, CA - The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) announced today a proposal to revise critical habitat for *Navarretia fossalis* (spreading navarretia), a federally threatened plant in southern California. Approximately 6,872 acres of habitat in portions of Los Angeles, Riverside, and San Diego counties are being proposed as critical habitat.

An advance copy of the text of the proposed rule is available online through the *Federal Register* at [Federal Register Public Inspection](#). The official copy, including maps, will be published in the *Federal Register* on June 10, 2009.

Comments and information on the proposed rule, may be submitted electronically to <http://www.regulations.gov>, or in writing to: Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS-R8-ES-2009-0038 Division of Policy and Directives Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 222, Arlington, VA 22203. Comments will be accepted until August 10, 2009. We will not accept e-mail or faxes and all comments received will be posted on <http://www.regulations.gov>. Requests for a public hearing must be submitted electronically or in writing to one of the addresses above by July 27, 2009.

A total of 7,086 acres of essential habitat are identified in this proposed rule, of which 214 acres are located on Marine Corps Base, Camp Pendleton and on Marine Corps Air Station, Miramar. These installations have completed Integrated Natural Resource Management Plans that provide a conservation benefit to spreading navarretia and are exempt from critical habitat.

Of the 6,872 acres proposed for critical habitat, the Service is considering excluding 5,675 acres covered under the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan; 86 acres covered by the County of San Diego Subarea Plan under the San Diego Multiple Species Conservation Program; and 3 acres covered by the City of Carlsbad Habitat Management Plan under the San Diego Multiple Habitat Conservation Program.

Areas proposed as critical habitat are identified in six units and are occupied by the plant. Over half of the lands are privately owned with the remaining areas managed by State, local, and federal agencies.

The proposed rule to revise critical habitat is a result of a lawsuit filed against the Service by the Center for Biological Diversity, challenging the validity of our exclusions in the 2005 critical habitat rule.

Identified essential habitat in this proposed rule is approximately 12,313 acres less than what was identified in the 2005 designation. This is primarily due to refinements of essential habitat along the San Jacinto River, at the Salt Creek Vernal Pool Complex, and at the Santa Rosa Plateau Ecological Reserve. However, the Service has also identified new areas of essential habitat at Santa Fe Valley (Crosby Estates), Carroll Canyon, Nobel Drive, Proctor Valley, and Otay Lakes.

Other differences between the 2005 designation and today's proposed revision include:

1. Improvements in defining the physical and biological features essential to the conservation of the plant;
2. Criteria used to identify critical habitat are described in more detail;
3. Refinements in mapping; and
4. Includes habitat conservation plans considered for exclusion

Spreading navarretia is a member of the phlox family. This plant grows up to 6 inches tall and has small lavender to white flowers that cluster in compact heads surrounded by spine tipped leaves. It is primarily associated with vernal pools, clay flats, alkali playas and alkali grasslands. The majority of the plant's habitat has been lost to agriculture and urban development.

In the 2005 final rule 652 acres were designated as critical habitat in portions of Los Angeles and San Diego counties. Approximately 18,747 acres of essential habitat in portions of Riverside and San Diego counties were exempt or excluded from the 2005 designation.

The Service is preparing a draft economic analysis of the proposed critical habitat that will be made available for public review and comment at a later date.

The official copy of the proposed rule and other information about spreading navarretia will be available on June 10, 2009, at <http://www.regulations.gov>, or [www.fws.gov/Carlsbad](http://www.fws.gov/Carlsbad), or by contacting the Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office at 760-431-9440.

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/](http://www.fws.gov/)

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