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News Release



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U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE PROPOSES REVISION OF QUINO CHECKERSPOT BUTTERFLY CRITICAL HABITAT

Carlsbad, CA --- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service published in today's *Federal Register* a proposed rule to revise critical habitat for the endangered Quino checkerspot butterfly (*Euphydryas editha quino*). Approximately 98,487 acres of land in portions of Riverside and San Diego counties, California, are included in the proposed designation.

Of the 98,487 acres identified in the proposed rule, the Service is considering excluding 1,684 acres of land within the San Diego County Multiple Species Conservation Plan's City of Chula Vista Subarea Plan, and 37,245 acres of non-Federal land within the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan area.

The proposed rule to revise critical habitat includes fewer areas (98,487 acres) than what was designated as critical habitat on April 15, 2002 (171,605 acres). Specifically, this proposal to revise critical habitat focuses on areas known to contain core occurrence complexes of the species. A core occurrence complex generally contains a large population that remains stable over the long-term while smaller, outlying populations disappear and reappear based on changing local environmental conditions. Core occurrence complexes provide the source of Quino checkerspot butterflies to re-colonize surrounding areas.

Some currently designated habitat in Riverside and San Diego counties is not included in the proposed revision because the particular areas do not meet the criteria for being considered a core occurrence complex. However, this proposed revision to critical habitat includes a newly identified core complex in San Diego County within and adjacent to the La Posta and Campo Indian Reservations.

This proposed rule to revise the Service's original April 15, 2002, critical habitat designation has been prepared in accordance with a settlement agreement stemming from a lawsuit filed by the Homebuilders Association of Northern California, et al.

Comments and information on the proposed rule may be submitted in writing to Public Comments Processing, Attn: 1018-AV23; Division of Policy and Directives Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 222, Arlington, VA 22203, or electronically to <http://www.regulations.gov>. Comments will be accepted until March 17, 2008. Written requests for a public hearing on this proposed rule will be accepted until March 3, 2008.

A copy of the proposed rule and other information about the Quino checkerspot butterfly is available on the Internet at <http://www.regulations.gov>, or at <http://www.fws.gov/Carlsbad>. For questions about the proposed rule, please contact the Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office at 760-431-9440.

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 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.