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# News Release



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## **U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE REVISES CRITICAL HABITAT FOR SAN DIEGO FAIRY SHRIMP AND COASTAL CALIFORNIA GNATCATCHER**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service published in today's *Federal Register* a final rule revising critical habitat for the federally endangered San Diego fairy shrimp. The revised designation for the San Diego fairy shrimp will become effective on Jan. 11, 2008, and supercedes the current critical habitat designation for this species. The revised final designation of critical habitat for the federally threatened coastal California gnatcatcher will publish in the *Federal Register* on Dec. 19, 2007, and will become effective 30 days from date of publication in the *Federal Register*.

The revised final critical habitat designation for the San Diego fairy shrimp includes 3,082 acres of habitat in portions of Orange and San Diego counties, California. For the coastal California gnatcatcher 169,837 acres of land in portions of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and San Diego counties are included in the revised final critical habitat designation.

In the final economic analyses that accompany these revised designations, impacts are estimated to be \$53,042,532 for the fairy shrimp, and approximately \$915,337,200 for the gnatcatcher. These estimated impacts encompass a 20-year time period beginning from the time each of the species was first protected under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

These economic impacts relate to a range of activities associated with both listing of the species under the ESA and designation of critical habitat, including habitat conservation and restoration costs, consultation costs, and costs incurred to comply with other State and local laws.

Critical habitat identifies geographic areas essential for the conservation of a threatened or endangered species and which may require special management considerations. The designation of critical habitat does not affect land ownership or establish a refuge, wilderness, reserve, preserve, or other conservation area. It does not allow government or public access to private lands and does not close areas to all access or use. Rather, its impact is that federal agencies must consult with the Service on activities they undertake, fund, or permit that may affect critical habitat.

Based on public comments, information that was made available during public comment periods, and other scientific information, some lands identified in the proposed rules to revise critical habitat for these two species have been removed, excluded or otherwise exempted from the final designations.

Areas exempted from critical habitat designation for both the fairy shrimp and the gnatcatcher include Marine Corps Air Station, Miramar, and Marine Corps Base, Camp Pendleton. These installations are exempt from critical habitat, based on a 2004 amendment to the ESA that prohibits the Service from designating military lands as critical habitat if the areas are covered by an approved Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan that provides a conservation benefit to the species.

Other lands were removed from the revised designations for the two species because the Service determined they are not essential to the species' conservation, do not contain the appropriate habitat features, or are not within the known historic range of either species.

Essential habitat for the fairy shrimp and gnatcatcher that is covered by an approved Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) is excluded from the revised designations because the Service determined these approved plans address the conservation and management needs of the species. The one exception is on land in the City of San Diego that is part of the San Diego County Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP). Although the MSCP is an approved HCP, a 2006 court ruling determined that the City's subarea plan under the MSCP is not adequate to ensure conservation of the San Diego fairy shrimp; therefore, essential habitat for the fairy shrimp within the City of San Diego is being designated as critical habitat.

All of the land included in the critical habitat designations for the fairy shrimp and the gnatcatcher are within the known historic ranges of the species and contain the habitat features that are essential to their respective conservation needs.

Detailed information about these revised critical habitat designations and the economic analyses for the fairy shrimp are available on the Internet at <http://www.fws.gov/Carlsbad>. Information for the gnatcatcher will also be posted on this site on Dec. 19.

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 97-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 548 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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