

News Release

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Service Proposes Reclassifying Stephens' Kangaroo Rat from Endangered to Threatened Under the Endangered Species Act

Carlsbad, *Calif.*— After more than 30 years of conservation efforts by federal, state and local partners, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is proposing to reclassify the Stephens' kangaroo rat from endangered to threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). A concurrent proposed 4(d) rule will provide additional management flexibility for landowners within the species' range to conduct weed and fire management activities, and other beneficial actions that are outlined in a Service-approved management plan.

Stephens' kangaroo rats are small mammals adapted to live in warm, arid environments. They have fur-lined external cheek pouches used to transport seeds, and large hind legs used for jumping.

“We appreciate the work of Riverside County, the Department of Defense and other federal, state and local partners in achieving this significant step towards recovery of this native California mammal,” said Paul Souza, Regional Director for the Service.

Patchily distributed in grassland habitat in portions of Riverside and San Diego counties, California, there are currently 18 locations occupied by the species. In Riverside County, the Stephens' kangaroo rat Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan support eight core reserves for the species.

In addition to the HCPs, the Department of Defense is also managing the species on Marine Corps Base, Camp Pendleton, on Naval Weapons Station Seal Beach, Detachment Fallbrook, and within Navy Base Coronado's Remote Training Site Warner Springs in San Diego County. Other partners contributing to the long-term conservation of the species include Cleveland National Forest and San Diego Zoo Global.

When the rat was listed as endangered in 1988, the primary threat was loss of habitat. Through the development of landscape-scale HCPs, along with management efforts on other federal, state and local lands, this threat has largely been ameliorated. Other activities such as grazing, predation by domestic cats and off-highway vehicles may affect individuals but are not impacting the species as a whole.

Comments on the proposed rule will be accepted until October 19, 2020. Requests for a public hearing must be submitted in writing by October 5, 2020.

The proposed downlisting rule is available for public review today in the [Federal Register](#). The proposed rule will officially publish on August 19, 2020, at which time all documents and

supporting information will be available at www.regulations.gov. In the search box, enter the Docket No. FWS–R8–ES–2019–0113.

Photos of the Stephens' kangaroo rat are available here:

https://www.flickr.com/photos/usfws_pacificsw/albums/72157715290242707

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