

Department of the Interior  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office  
6010 Hidden Valley Road  
Carlsbad, California 92011  
Phone: 760/431-9440  
Fax: 760/431-5901

# News Release



<http://www.fws.gov/carlsbad/>

Contact: Jane Hendron, Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office – 760/431-9440 ext. 205

For Release: April 3, 2007

## **FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE SEEKS UPDATED INFORMATION ON COASTAL CALIFORNIA GNATCATCHER AND SAN DIEGO FAIRY SHRIMP CRITICAL HABITAT PROPOSALS**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced today it is opening a new public comment period on its proposed critical habitat rules and associated economic analyses for the coastal California gnatcatcher (*Poliophtila californica californica*), and San Diego fairy shrimp (*Branchinecta sandiegonensis*).

On April 24, 2003, the Service published in the Federal Register a proposed rule to designate critical habitat for the coastal California gnatcatcher on about 495,795 acres of land in southern California. A proposed rule to designate 6,098 acres of land in Orange and San Diego counties as critical habitat for the San Diego fairy shrimp was published on April 22, 2003.

Draft economic analyses of these proposed rules were made available for public review and comment on April 8, 2004. The draft analysis of the gnatcatcher proposal estimated that if all areas proposed as critical habitat are designated, total impacts could range up to \$915.3 million over the next 23 years, with annualized impacts of approximately \$113.4 million.

Total economic impacts associated with the proposed designation of critical habitat for the San Diego fairy shrimp are estimated to be up to \$54.6 million, with an annualized impact of \$7.2 million. This estimate includes areas proposed as critical habitat as well as lands containing features essential to the conservation of the species that were not proposed for designation.

Types of comments and information we are seeking include:

- New information on areas proposed as critical habitat for both species that may have been lost as a result of development or other land use;
- New biological information regarding effects of the wildfires of October 2003 and more recently on coastal sage scrub habitat in Ventura, Los Angeles, Riverside, San

Bernardino, and San Diego counties, and other relevant publications addressing the status and recovery of coastal sage scrub habitat and conservation of the gnatcatcher;

- Information regarding newly identified vernal pools not previously known to support San Diego fairy shrimp and whether these areas are essential to the conservation of the species, and why;
- Comments regarding how vernal pools within the boundaries of the City of San Diego's Subarea Plan under the Multiple Species Conservation Program that have been proposed for exclusion from critical habitat should be evaluated in light of the October 13, 2006, ruling by the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California enjoining the incidental take permit for seven vernal pool species (including San Diego fairy shrimp) issued by the Service to the City; and
- Whether the draft economic analyses made appropriate assumptions regarding likely regulatory changes, indirect effects, opportunity costs and regional costs associated with land use controls that could arise from the designation of critical habitat for the two species.

Comments and information will be accepted until May 3, 2007.

Written comments and materials can be submitted in writing to the Field Supervisor, Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office, 6010 Hidden Valley Road, Carlsbad, California 92011. Comments and materials may also be sent by facsimile to 760/431-5901, or by electronic mail to **[fw8cfwocomments@fws.gov](mailto:fw8cfwocomments@fws.gov)**.

Complete information about the coastal California gnatcatcher and San Diego fairy shrimp proposals are available on the Internet at [www.fws.gov/carlsbad](http://www.fws.gov/carlsbad).

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 Fish and Wildlife Management 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 Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

*For more information about the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, visit our home page at [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov)*

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