



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

## NEWS RELEASE

SNAKE RIVER BASIN OFFICE

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September 8, 2000

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#00-14

### SERVICE REOPENS PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD FOR PROPOSED RULE AND CRITICAL HABITAT DETERMINATION FOR SPALDING'S CATCHFLY

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today reopened the comment period on the proposed rule and critical habitat determination for Spalding's catchfly (*Silene spaldingii*).

On December 3, 1999, the Service proposed to list Spalding's catchfly as a threatened species according to the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (Act). A species is listed as threatened when it is likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range. An endangered species is one that is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range. On April 24, 2000, the Service issued a Notice proposing that designation of critical habitat is prudent for this species.

The Spalding's catchfly is a member of the pink or carnation family. It has small greenish-white flowers and foliage covered with sticky hairs. The plant is native to Palouse prairie habitats in eastern Washington, north-western Montana, west-central Idaho, northeastern Oregon and southern British Columbia, Canada. Currently, there are only 52 locations where the catchfly is found, containing a total of about 16,500 plants. The majority of remaining Spalding's catchfly populations are extremely small and isolated, often bordering adjacent agricultural fields or rangelands. Threats to the species include habitat destruction and fragmentation from agricultural and urban development, livestock grazing, fire suppression, herbicide spraying and competition from non-native vegetation.

"Any final action the Service takes resulting from this proposal to list Spalding's catchfly as threatened will be as accurate and effective as possible. We believe it is necessary to reopen the public comment period to ensure this occurs," said Anne Badgley, regional director of the Service's Pacific Region. This proposal, if made final, would implement the Federal protection and recovery provisions afforded by the Act for the plant.

Comments may be submitted electronically to the Service at the following e-mail address: **FWISRBOComment@fws.gov**. The subject line of all electronic mail submissions must include "Attn: RIN number, Silene Comments." Please submit comments in ASCII file format and avoid the use of special characters and encryption. Comments must include the name of the submitter and return address in order for us to consider them. If you do not receive a confirmation from the system that we have received your e-mail message, contact us directly by phoning the Snake River Basin Office at (208) 378-5243. Written comments and materials may be hand-delivered or mailed directly to the Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Snake River Basin Office, 1387 S. Vinnell Way, Room 368, Boise, Idaho 83709. Comments from interested parties must be received by September 22, 2000.

For further information, contact Robert Ruesink, supervisor, or Edna Rey-Vizgirdas, botanist, at (208) 378-5243, FAX (208) 378-5262.

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The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 93-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System comprised of more than 500 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands, and other special management areas. It also operates 66 national fish hatcheries, 64 fish and wildlife management assistance offices and 78 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 Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state wildlife agencies. NOTE: This news release and others can be viewed on either the Service's Pacific Regional home page on the Internet at <http://www.r1.fws.gov>.