



News Release

Public Affairs Office
PO Box 1306
Albuquerque, NM 87103
505/248-6911
505/248-6915 (Fax)

Southwest Region (Arizona • New Mexico • Oklahoma • Texas) <http://southwest.fws.gov>

For Release: Draft of February 8, 2005

Contacts: Elizabeth Slown (505) 248-6909 or 363-9592 (cell) or Victoria Fox (505) 248-6455

Endangered Falcon Could be Reintroduced in the Southwest

Public Invited to Comment on Proposal

The endangered northern aplomado falcon could be reintroduced into its native skies above New Mexico using a flexible recovery tool under the Endangered Species Act.

The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) proposes to reintroduce northern aplomado falcons into the Chihuahuan desert grasslands in New Mexico. Northern aplomado falcons in all of New Mexico and Arizona will be considered a nonessential experimental population under section 10(j) of the Endangered Species Act. A non-essential, experimental population places no burden on private landowners and asks federal agencies to confer with the Service on activities that might impact the birds.

Residents, state officials, farmers, recreationists and others are encouraged to comment on the draft proposal and accompanying environmental assessment to reintroduce the swift avian hunter back into the places it once inhabited. A public hearing will be held March 15 at the Corbett Center Student Union, Jordan Street and University Avenue, in Las Cruces, New Mexico from 7 p.m. to 8:45 p.m. An informal question and answer session begins at 6 p.m. Parking is located in Lot 27 off of Triviz and University Avenue.

“We believe establishing a nonessential population will help ensure the long-term survival and recovery of this species,” said Dale Hall, director of the Service’s Southwest Region. “Using this tool, we have much more leeway to work with local citizens and other agencies to take their concerns into account so that current and future land uses and activities will not be restricted.”

The draft rule proposes to begin releases of captive-raised falcons in the summer of 2006. Up to 150 falcons could be released annually for ten or more years until a self-sustaining population is established. “Experimental reintroductions can be a great aid in the recovery of threatened or endangered species,” said Hall.

The proposed reintroductions are part of a larger recovery effort already underway for the falcon across its range. Reintroductions can take place on private or public lands using different tools. Falcons have been reintroduced on national wildlife refuge lands in Texas. Texas has a reintroduction program geared to private landowners with more than 1.4 million owned acres enrolled. Texas illustrates the

rapidity with which a population can be established through releases. The northern aplomado falcon population in the U.S. has gone from zero birds in 1994 to at least 39 pairs producing at least 179 young by 2004.

The northern aplomado falcon was listed as endangered in 1986 under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended. The state of New Mexico listed this falcon as endangered in 1990, and Arizona gave it the same designation in 1995.

Although no falcons have been documented in Arizona since the 1940s, sporadic falcon sightings have occurred in New Mexico. A breeding pair in Luna County, New Mexico successfully hatched three chicks in 2002 but no chicks have been documented since then.

Comments on the proposed rule can be mailed or hand-delivered to the New Mexico Ecological Services Field Office, 2105 Osuna Road NE, Albuquerque, New Mexico 87113. Comments may be sent by facsimile to (505) 346-2542 or through electronic mail to R2FWE_AL@fws.gov. Copies of the proposed rule and the draft environmental assessment are available from the above address, by calling (505) 346-2525 or by logging on to the internet at (address).

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 545 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.

-<http://southwest.fws.gov> -