



News Release

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Arizona Ecological Services Field Office

www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/

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Service to Seek Information on Proposal to give Arizona-Utah Plant Endangered Species Protection

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today announced that it is proposing to protect Gierisch mallow as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and is seeking additional information to help inform that decision. The Service is also proposing to designate critical habitat for this plant species. The Gierisch mallow, found primarily on federal land in Utah and Arizona, is a perennial, orange-flowered plant that grows up to 3.4 feet tall.

18 known populations of the plant – 17 on Bureau of Land Management and one on Arizona State Land Department administered land – are found in northern Mohave County, Arizona and southern Washington County, Utah. Primary threats to the mallow include unauthorized off-road vehicle use, gypsum mining and other recreational activities.

In areas under federal jurisdiction, the ESA prohibits malicious damage or destruction of threatened or endangered plants. Federal agencies that undertake, fund or permit activities that may affect critical habitat must consult with the Service to ensure such actions are conducted in a manner that does not adversely affect designated critical habitat. Critical habitat designations have no effect on actions taking place on non-federal lands unless proposed activities involve federal funding or permitting.

A total of 12,822 acres has been identified as potentially eligible for critical habitat designation for the Gierisch mallow. Critical habitat is a term in the ESA that identifies geographic areas containing features essential for the conservation of a threatened or endangered species.

The Service is seeking biological, commercial trade, or other relevant information concerning any threats to the Gierisch mallow, and regulations and conservation activities that may be addressing those threats. An economic analysis and environmental assessment of the effects of critical habitat designation will be conducted and made available at a later date.

Native plants are important for their ecological, economic, and aesthetic values. Plants play an important role in development of crops that resist disease, insects, and drought. Plants can also used to develop natural pesticides.

Written comments and information concerning this proposal can be submitted by one of the following methods:

- Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the instructions for submitting comments to Docket No. [FWS-R2-ES-2012-0049]; or
- U.S. mail or hand-delivery: Public Comments Processing, Attn: [FWS-R2-ES-2012-0049]; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, MS 2042-PDM; Arlington, VA 22203.

Comments must be received within 60 days, on or before October 16, 2012. The Service will post all comments on <http://www.regulations.gov>. This generally means the agency will post any personal information provided through the process. The Service is not able to accept email or faxes. Requests for hearings must be received within 45 days, on or before October 1, 2012.

More information on the proposed rule, maps, and other details about the plants are available online at: <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/> or by contacting the Service's Arizona Ecological Service Office at (602) 242-0210.

America's fish, wildlife and plant resources belong to all of us, and ensuring the health of imperiled species is a shared responsibility. The Service is actively engaged with conservation partners and the public in the search for improved and innovative ways to conserve and recover imperiled species. To learn more about the Endangered Species program, go to <http://www.fws.gov/angered/>.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov. Connect with our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/usfws, follow our tweets at www.twitter.com/usfwshq, watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwshq>.

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Editor's Note: Photos of the Gierisch mallow are available by contacting Jeff Humphrey at 602-242-0210 x222 or on the Internet at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/Plants.htm>.