



News Release

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Fish and Wildlife Service Reopens Comment Period for Dunes Sagebrush Lizard

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), after numerous requests, has reopened the public comment period for 30 days on the December 13, 2010 proposed listing of the dunes sagebrush lizard. This comment period will begin with the publication of this announcement in the Federal Register.

The Service will hold public hearings in Texas and New Mexico. The first will be on April 27, 2011, in the Midland Center & Centennial Plaza, 105 N. Main Street, Midland, Texas, 79701. The second will be held on April 28, 2011, at the ENMU-Roswell Performing Arts Center, 64 University Blvd., Roswell, NM. In each location we will hold a public informational session from 3:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., followed by a public hearing from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

The ESA provides a critical safety net for America's native fish, wildlife and plants. This landmark conservation law has prevented the extinction of hundreds of imperiled species across the nation and promoted the recovery of many others. The Service has found that the dunes sagebrush lizard is presently in danger of extinction throughout its entire range, based on the immediacy, severity, and scope of the ongoing significant threats of habitat loss and fragmentation.

The dunes sagebrush lizard faces immediate and significant threats due to oil and gas activities, and herbicide treatments. The species is highly restricted in its range, and the threats occur throughout its range. Habitat loss and fragmentation due to oil and gas development is a measureable factor impacting the species due to the removal of shinnery oak and creation of roads and pads, pipelines, and power lines.

The ESA makes it illegal to kill, harm or otherwise "take" a listed species, or to possess, import, export or engage in interstate or international commerce of a listed species without authorization in the form of a permit from the Service. The ESA also requires all federal agencies to minimize the impact of their activities on listed species and directs the Service to work with federal agencies and

other partners to develop and carry out recovery efforts for those species. Listing also focuses attention on the needs of the species, encouraging conservation efforts by other agencies (federal, state, and local), conservation groups and other organizations and individuals.

The dunes sagebrush lizard, found in southeastern New Mexico and adjacent west Texas, is a small, light brown lizard with a maximum snout-to-vent length of 2.8 inches for females and 2.6 inches for males. This lizard is a habitat specialist native to a small area of shinnery oak dunes extending from the San Juan Mesa in northeastern Chaves County, Roosevelt County, through eastern Eddy and southern Lea Counties in New Mexico. In Texas, the dunes sagebrush lizard is found in a narrow band of shinnery oak dunes in Gaines, Ward, Winkler, and Andrews Counties.

The Service is requesting comments or information from the public, other concerned governmental agencies, Native American Tribes, the scientific community, industry, or any other interested parties concerning this proposed rule. The agency will consider comments received or postmarked on or before May 9, 2011.

For additional information, contact Wally “J” Murphy, Field Supervisor, New Mexico Ecological Services Field Office, 2105 Osuna NE, Albuquerque, NM, 87113; telephone 505-761-4718 or facsimile 505-346-2542. Persons who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 800-877-8339.

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. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service works cooperatively with the American public to continue the conservation legacy of America’s great outdoors. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov.

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