



Sacramento Mountains thistle *Questions and Answers*

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

The US Fish and Wildlife Service has been petitioned to remove the Sacramento Mountains thistle (*Cirsium vinaceum*) from the list of federally threatened and endangered plants and animals. This action would also remove the plant from Endangered Species Act protection.

Q. What is the Sacramento Mountains thistle?

A. The thistle is a stout plant, 3.3-5.9 feet (1-1.8 m) tall. Thistle stems are brown-purple and highly branched. The basal leaves are green, 12-20 inches (30-50 cm) long, and up to 8 inches (20 cm) wide, with ragged edges.

Q. When was the thistle given Endangered Species Act protection, and why?

A. On June 16, 1987, we listed the thistle as a threatened species based on threats from water development, grazing, recreation, logging, and the invasion of exotic plants. A recovery plan was finalized in 1993.

Q. Where is the thistle found?

A. The thistle presently occurs within the Sacramento Mountains of Otero County, New Mexico. The thistle occurs within the mixed conifer zone, above 7,500 feet, in the limestone substrate of the Sacramento Mountains in New Mexico. The thistle is a riparian species that requires saturated soils with surface or sub-surface water flow. This plant requires wetland/riparian habitats along springs, seeps, and streams. Waters at these sites are rich in calcium carbonate that often precipitates out to create large areas of travertine (calcium carbonate) deposits, which occasionally become large bluffs or hills. Travertine deposits are the most common habitats of the thistle.

Q. Why is the Fish and Wildlife Service working on this action?

A. The Fish and Wildlife Service is responding to an August 13, 2007, petition that we received from the Board of County Commissioners of Otero County, New Mexico, to delist the thistle as a threatened species. The Service found that the delisting petition and other information in our files presents substantial information that delisting the Sacramento Mountains thistle may be warranted, and we are initiating a status review. If our review shows the thistle no longer needs Endangered Species Act protection, we can propose a new rule that would remove the species from the endangered species list.

Q. How does the Service propose a change to the thistle's status?

A. If the agency does propose a change, a formal rule-making process would begin, including public review and comment. No change in status would occur until the process is completed.

Q. What information will be considered for the status review?

A. With this review (also called a 12-month review), the Service will consider all the information that has become available since the species' original listing. Information may include, but is not limited to:

- a. Species biology including, population trends, distribution, abundance, demographics, and genetics;
- b. Habitat conditions including, but not limited to, amount, distribution, and suitability;
- c. Conservation measures that have been implemented that benefit the species;
- d. Threat status and trends; and
- e. Other new information, data, or corrections including, but not limited to, taxonomic or nomenclature changes, identification of erroneous information contained in the list, and improved analytical methods.

The Service is especially interested in new information, analyses, and/or reports that summarize and interpret the following: demographic and population trends; genetics and competition; habitat amount, use and distribution; and adequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms, management, and conservation planning; advances in analysis that, when applied to the original listing data, provide a different interpretation or conclusion will be considered new information.

We request this information for all applicable land ownerships with the range of the species.

Submissions should be supported by documentation such as maps, bibliographic references, methods used to gather and analyze data, and/or copies of any pertinent publications, reports, or letters by knowledgeable sources. All information that is submitted will be considered.

Q. After assessing this information, what will the Service do?

A. Once the Service gathers information regarding the thistle, the agency will know:

- a. whether new information suggests that the species' populations are increasing, declining, or stable;
- b. whether existing factors affecting the species are increasing, the same, reduced or eliminated;
- c. if there are any additional factors affecting the species;
- d. whether there are conservation actions affecting the species; and,

e. if new information or analysis calls into question any conclusions in the original listing determination.

Q. How do I review the Service's proposal and make comment or submit information?

Our proposal is on the internet at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/Library/> - just search under Sacramento Mountains thistle. You may submit information via the Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the instructions for submitting comments. Additionally, you may submit comments through the U.S. mail or hand-delivery: Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS – R2-ES-2008-0114; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 222; Arlington, VA 22203. Sorry, e-mail or faxes aren't accepted.

Q. When should information be submitted?

A. In order to allow the Service adequate time to consider information as we conduct this review, we must receive information submissions no later than Dec. 22, 2008.

Q. Will submissions be available to the public after the review?

A. Information received in response to this notice, and review results, will be available for public inspection by appointment during normal business hours at the above Service address.

More questions?

Write or call:
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