

NEWS RELEASE

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Mountain-Prairie Region

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Mountain Plover Proposed for Listing as a Threatened Species *Scientific Information Will Be Accepted Until August 30, 2010*

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is reinstating a proposal to list the mountain plover, a native bird of short-grass prairie and shrub-steppe landscapes, as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. The Service also requests the public to provide scientific information regarding the reinstated proposal and the newly available information regarding the status of the mountain plover.

Mountain plovers breed in the western Great Plains and Rocky Mountain States from the Canadian border to northern Mexico. Within the United States, most breeding occurs in Montana, Wyoming, and Colorado; fewer breeding birds occur in Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, and Utah.

Mountain plovers winter in California, southern Arizona, Texas and Mexico. While California's Sacramento, San Joaquin, and Imperial Valleys are believed to support the greatest number of wintering mountain plovers, relatively little is known about their winter range use in other areas. Unlike other plovers, mountain plovers are not found near water, and will only inhabit areas with short grass or bare ground.

The Service originally proposed the listing of the mountain plover in December 2002. The 2002 proposal also included a proposed special rule exempting specified farming practices in certain parts of the mountain plover's breeding range from Endangered Species Act prohibitions while research was being conducted regarding the conservation of the species on farmed lands. Subsequently, the Service withdrew the listing proposal in September 2003 based on the conclusion that the threats to the mountain plover as identified in the proposed rule were not as significant as previously believed and that information available at that time did not indicate the threats to the mountain plover and its habitat were likely to endanger the species in the foreseeable future.

In November 2006, the Forest Guardians and the Biological Conservation Alliance filed a complaint challenging the withdrawal of the proposal to list the mountain plover. As part of the settlement agreement, the Service agreed to vacate our 2003 withdrawal of the listing proposal and reopen a comment period on our 2002 proposal. This notice satisfies that requirement. The Service also agreed to submit a final listing decision to the Federal Register by May 1, 2011.

The Service is seeking scientific information regarding the mountain plover's life history, ecology, and habitat use; its range, distribution, population size, and population trends; current and potential future threats to the mountain plover and its habitat; and positive and negative effects of current and potential land management practices that affect mountain plover, including conservation efforts.

Scientific information will be accepted until August 30, 2010 and can be submitted electronically via the Federal eRulemaking Portal at: <http://www.regulations.gov> (search the docket for FWS-R6-ES-2010-0038), or can be mailed or hand delivered to Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS-R6-ES-2010-0038; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 222; Arlington, VA 22203.

Pertinent information received, developed, or analyzed since 2002 is available for review at <http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/birds/mountainplover> or by contacting the Colorado Ecological Services Field Office Supervisor at 303-236-4773.

The Service will evaluate all information regarding the status and distribution of the mountain plover, including the impacts or potential impacts to the species resulting from either human activities or natural causes.

The mountain plover is a small bird about the size of a killdeer. It is light brown above, with a lighter-colored breast, but lacks the contrasting dark breastbelt common to many other plovers. During the breeding season, it has a white forehead and a dark line between the beak and eye which contrasts with the dark crown.

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