



NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release
November 22, 2011

Contact

Jeff Humphrey, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, (602) 242-0210, ext. 222
Lynda Lambert, Arizona Game and Fish Department, (623) 236-7203
Susan Whaley, The Peregrine Fund, (208) 362-8274
Rachel Tueller, Bureau of Land Management, (435) 688-3303
Maureen Oltrogge, Grand Canyon National Park, (928) 638-7779
Cory Maylett, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, (801) 518-6125
Patrick Lair, Kaibab National Forest, (928) 643-8172

INPUT SOUGHT IN REVIEW OF SOUTHWEST CALIFORNIA CONDOR PROGRAM

Phoenix, Ariz. – Land managers and condor biologists are seeking public input on an ongoing program to reintroduce California condors to the canyon lands and high plateaus of northern Arizona and southern Utah.

“Local community support is a large part of the success of the Southwest condor recovery project,” said Steve Spangle, Fish and Wildlife Service’s Arizona field supervisor. “In addition to biological information, it’s important for us to hear how condors may have enriched individuals’ outdoor experiences and local economies, whether the program has interfered with land-use practices, and whether individuals and local governments have incurred expenses resulting from the program.”

“Any information or concerns or ideas that may improve the program would be helpful in our efforts to recover this endangered species and benefit local communities.”

Comments from the public, local governments and agencies are requested. In order to be fully considered, comments should be submitted by December 16, 2011. Comments may be e-mailed SWcondorComments@fws.gov, mailed to Field Supervisor, Arizona Ecological Services Office, 2321 West Royal Palm Road, Suite 103, Phoenix, AZ 85021-4951 or faxed to (602) 242-2513.

The call for comments is part of a Federal rule establishing the experimental release program. The rule requires a review of the program every five years to gauge public acceptance of the program, and its overall success, and to solicit recommendations.

The release of California condors in northern Arizona is a joint public/private partnership between The Peregrine Fund, the Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Arizona Game and Fish Department, Utah Division of Wildlife

Resources, Coalition of Resources and Economies, The Phoenix Zoo, U.S. Forest Service, and other partners. The Peregrine Fund, a non-profit organization, is funding and conducting the releases and monitoring the condors.

Condors are scavenging birds that soared over many parts of the United States since prehistoric times. Their numbers plummeted in the 20th century and in 1967 the condor was listed as an endangered species under a law predating the existing Endangered Species Act. Since the project started in December 1996, 132 condors have been released to the wild in northern Arizona. Reintroduction efforts have been frustrated by lead poisonings, bird-human interactions, and shootings. Sixty-seven condors have died. Presently, there are 73 free-flying condors in the northern Arizona/southern Utah population, including seven wild-fledged birds - two in recent days. The condors have been observed to fly long distances, but they generally have remained within the greater Grand Canyon ecosystem and the vicinity of Zion National Park.

The goal of the California Condor Recovery Plan is to establish two geographically separate, self-sustaining populations -- a primary population in California and the other outside of California, each with 150 birds and at least 15 breeding pairs. For information about the California condor experiment (including previous 5-year reviews), go to: http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/CA_Condor.htm or www.peregrinefund.org.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Prior to reintroduction, the last wild condor in Arizona was sighted just south of the Grand Canyon in 1924.
- Condors reach maturity at about six years of age. They usually produce one egg every other year.
- The condor is the largest land bird in North America. The birds can weigh up to 26 pounds and have a wingspan up to 9½ feet.
- Condors were added to the federal Endangered Species List in 1967.
- Lead poisoning is the leading cause of death for California Condors in Arizona, with 19 deaths confirmed since 2000.

###