



News Release

Arizona Ecological Services Field Office
2321 W. Royal Palm Road, Suite 103
Phoenix, Arizona 85021
602/242-0210
602/242-2513 (Fax)

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

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Contacts: Jeff Humphrey (602) 242-0210 x222 or Elizabeth Slown (505) 248-6909

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE REVIEWING STATUS OF ARIZONA VOLE

-Petitioned to Remove Mammal from Endangered Species List-

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has found that a petition to reevaluate the endangered species status of the Hualapai Mexican vole under the Endangered Species Act warrants further investigation. Arizona Game and Fish Department's 2004 petition calls into question the taxonomy of the subspecies of the 5½-inch, short-tailed mammal, stating that it may be part of a broader ranging species.

When added to the list of endangered species in 1987, the Hualapai Mexican vole was known to occur only in the Hualapai Mountains (southwest of Kingman, Ariz.) and thought to occur in Music Mountains and Prospect Valley to the northeast. Some experts contend that what was thought to be a narrowly distributed subspecies is actually one of many slightly varying populations within a larger subspecies or full species distributed across much of northern Arizona. Others contend that the Hualapai Mexican vole is one of three differing Mexican vole subspecies in northern Arizona.

"The Game and Fish Department's petition presents substantial information about the classification and distribution of the vole; but some questions remain, and we'll be working with the Department and other experts to answer those questions," said Steve Spangle, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Arizona Field Supervisor. "We will conduct a one-year status review to determine whether the Hualapai Mexican vole is correctly recognized under the Endangered Species Act and whether its continued protection may be warranted."

Should the status review indicate that the Hualapai Mexican vole is a member of a larger classification, the Service would assess the status of that larger grouping of Mexican voles. Such an evaluation could lead to a proposal to remove the vole from the endangered species list.

The Service requests that researchers, land managers and the public submit information on the vole's taxonomy, genetics, threats and habitat by July 14, 2008. Information should be submitted on the World Wide Web at <http://www.regulations.gov> or by mail to Public Comments Processing, Attn: Docket FWS-R2-ES-2008-0037; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 4401 N. Fairfax Dr., Ste 222, Arlington, VA 22203. Requests for supporting documents can be submitted to Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2321 W. Royal Palm Rd., Suite 103, Phoenix, AZ 85021-4951; phone 602/242-0210 or fax 602/242-2513. Additional information is also available at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/Hualapai.htm>.

The Hualapai Mexican vole is a cinnamon-brown, mouse-sized mammal with a short tail and fur that nearly covers its small, round ears. It inhabits woodland forest types containing the grasses and sedges it feeds

upon. Recent research suggests that populations occur in the Hualapai Mountains, Music Mountains, Hualapai Nation, Aubrey Cliffs, Chino Wash, Santa Maria Mountains, and Bradshaw Mountains and possibly Round Mountain and Sierra Prieta.

The vole was added to the endangered species list due to its rarity and very limited habitat along with threats posed by drought, elimination of ground cover due to grazing by livestock and elk, increased concentration of ungulates at developed water sources, and human recreation.

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.

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