

News Release

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Protects Two Pine Rockland Plants

VERO BEACH, Fla. – The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is announcing endangered species status for two plant species only found in South Florida--the Florida brickell-bush and Carter's small-flowered flax. This protection becomes final on October 4, 2014, 30 days after publication in the Federal Register.

Both plants are only found on the Miami Rock Ridge in South Florida. Most of the historical pine rockland habitat on the Miami Rock Ridge has been developed or converted to agriculture, and much of the remaining areas are degraded due to inadequate fire management and proliferation of non-native, invasive plants. Another potential threat to both plants is sea level rise.

Current populations of these plants are between 2,150 to 3,700 plants for Florida brickell-bush, and about 1,300 plants for Carter's small-flowered flax. Compared to their historical ranges, the current ranges of both plants have shrunk significantly.

These two pine rockland plants have been candidates for federal listing since 1999. Both plants were proposed for listing as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), with a critical habitat designation on October 3, 2013. The final rule on the critical habitat designation is pending. The decision to add these plants to the Endangered Species List is based on the best scientific information available. For more information, please see <http://www.regulations.gov>, docket number FWS-R4-ES-2013-0033.

The listing of these two plants is part of the Service's efforts to implement a court-approved work plan under a Multi-District Listing Agreement aimed at addressing a series of lawsuits concerning the agency's ESA listing program. The intent of the agreement is to significantly reduce a litigation-driven workload. For more information, please see <http://www.fws.gov/southeast/candidateconservation/>

The ultimate goal is to recover listed plants and wildlife so that they no longer need protection under the ESA. The next step is to develop recovery plans that provide guidance for the Service and its conservation partners to address threats to the plants' survival and recovery.

Federal landowners must comply with provisions of the ESA to protect these plants on their land. It is unlawful to remove from federal lands plants that are listed as endangered

under the ESA, or to import, export, or sell such plants without first consulting with the Service.

The Service offers willing landowners a number of voluntary and non-regulatory conservation programs to help these plants survive as they live and work on their lands. Landowners interested in helping the Service recover the Florida brickell-bush and Carter's small-flowered flax, or who would like more information about the potential implications of the listing should contact Mr. Ken Warren, South Florida Ecological Services Office, 1339 20th Street, Vero Beach, Florida, 32960, by telephone at 772-469-3909, ext. 323, or e-mail at Ken_Warren@fws.gov.

Non-profit organizations, government agencies, and private landowners have partnered with the Service to manage and restore pine rocklands on public and private lands. For example, since 2005, the non-profit Institute for Regional Conservation has been conducting pine rockland restoration activities in urbanized Miami-Dade County, funded through various Service-sponsored grants and other sources.

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. For more information, visit www.fws.gov. Connect with our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/usfwssoutheast, follow our tweets at www.twitter.com/usfwssoutheast, watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwssoutheast>

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