

News Release

Division of External Affairs
Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office
2177 Salk Avenue, Suite 250
Carlsbad, California 92008
Phone: 760-431-9440
www.fws.gov/carlsbad



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Contact: Jane Hendron, 760-431-9440 ext. 205

San Diego Butterfly Proposed for Protection under the Endangered Species Act *Concurrent proposed special rule would exempt some routine activities*

Carlsbad, Calif. — The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is proposing to list the Hermes copper butterfly as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. Primary factors contributing to the butterfly's decline include increased frequency and magnitude of wildfires, and habitat loss and fragmentation from land conversion.

The proposed listing includes a special rule that would allow certain activities that benefit the butterfly and are necessary for public safety to continue without the need for additional permits from the Service. Activities proposed for exemption on the prohibition of take include: maintenance of existing fuel breaks and firefighting activities, survey and monitoring work as part of scientific inquiry and captive-rearing of Hermes copper butterflies for the purpose of reintroduction and population augmentation, in coordination with the Service.

“The Service has been working with the San Diego Association of Governments, the U.S. Marine Corps, and others to conserve this species in conjunction with regional Habitat Conservation Planning (HCP) efforts,” says Paul Souza, Regional Director for the Service’s Pacific Southwest Region. “The proposal recognizes benefits to the species associated with management of preserve areas established through our regional HCPs.”

First identified in 1927, the Hermes copper butterfly is limited to San Diego County and northwestern Baja California, Mexico. Of the 96 documented historic occurrences throughout its range, 45 occurrences continue to be present, all in the United States. The status of Hermes copper butterfly in Mexico is unknown.

Hermes copper butterflies lay their eggs exclusively on spiny redberry bushes which are found in coastal sage scrub and chaparral habitats. The primary nectar source for adults is California buckwheat. Adult butterflies are brown with orange on the upper wings, and have yellow undersides with black dots.

The Service is proposing to designate approximately 35,000 acres of critical habitat in portions of San Diego County.

The proposed rule is on view at the [Federal Register](https://www.federalregister.gov) today and will officially publish on January 8, 2020. Comments will be accepted until March 9, 2020. Requests for a public hearing must be received no later than February 24, 2020.

Information on how to submit comments is available at [regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov) by searching FWS-R8-ES-2017-0053.

You can also submit comments and information, or a hearing request in writing to: Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS-R8-ES-2017-0053; U.S. Fish & Wildlife Headquarters, MS: BPHC, 5275 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, VA 22041-3803.

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