

# News Release

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## Iconic Joshua Tree Does Not Require Protection Under the Endangered Species Act

Carlsbad, *Calif.*— The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today announced it has thoroughly reviewed the status of the Joshua tree and concluded it does not require protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

The Joshua tree is best known for its presence in Joshua Tree National Park, but it also spans several million acres of high-desert habitat in Arizona, Nevada, Utah and California. Adapted to harsh desert conditions, the trees can tolerate extreme temperatures, ranging from 4 to 120 degrees Fahrenheit and elevations between 1,900 to 7,200 feet.

Through consultation with experts and review of scientific literature, the Service determined that there are two species of Joshua tree, *Yucca brevifolia* and *Yucca jaegeriana*. They are both commonly referred to as Joshua tree. The two species are similar in appearance; however, they rely on different species of yucca moth for pollination, and *Y. jaegeriana* has shorter leaves and is shorter in height than *Y. brevifolia*.

The Service reviewed the status of both species and assessed the potential impact on their populations of stressors such as wildfire, drought, plant-eating animals, and climate change. The Service’s analysis determined that neither taxa currently requires protection under the ESA.

Most habitat occupied by the two species is federally-managed by agencies including the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service and Department of Defense. A much smaller portion of habitat is managed by state or local governments or is privately owned. Species distribution mapping shows there has been no major reduction or contraction in Joshua tree populations during the last 40 years. Additionally, several federal agencies, the states of California and Arizona and several local jurisdictions have adopted and implemented policies that provide some protections to Joshua trees from harvesting and removal.

The Joshua tree finding is available for public view today at the [Federal Register](#), and will officially publish in the *Federal Register* on August 15, 2019. All documents and supporting information for the 12-month finding will be available at [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov). In the search box enter Docket No FWS-R8-ES-2016-0088 and click “search”.

Photos of both Joshua tree species are available on Flickr: [Joshua tree images](#)

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