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News Release



<http://www.fws.gov/carlsbad>

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For Release: Feb. 6, 2007

CRITICAL HABITAT PROPOSED FOR NEVIN'S BARBERRY PLANT

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today published a proposed rule to designate approximately 417 acres of land in portions of Riverside County, California, as critical habitat for Nevin's barberry, a federally endangered plant.

Areas proposed for critical habitat designation support naturally occurring populations of Nevin's barberry that have displayed evidence of reproduction, or have the potential to reproduce based on the presence of multiple individuals.

Although 417 acres are identified in the proposed rule, the Service is anticipating excluding all but 32 acres from the final designation. The lands being considered for exclusion from the final designation are privately owned and are covered by the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan.

The 32 acres being proposed for designation are public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service.

Nevin's barberry is an evergreen shrub found only in scattered locations in portions of Los Angeles, San Bernardino and Riverside counties. This species generally grows in low-gradient sandy washes, alluvial terraces, and along the margins of gravelly washes.

This shrub is grown in the nursery trade and has been planted at numerous sites throughout its historic range. It is not known what role planted individuals may play in aiding conservation of Nevin's barberry; therefore, they were not proposed for critical habitat designation.

Critical habitat is a term in the Endangered Species Act. It identifies geographic areas that contain features essential for the conservation of a threatened or endangered species and may require special management considerations or protection.

Public comments on the proposed rule will be accepted until **XXXX XX**, 2007. Written comments on the proposal should be submitted to the Field Supervisor, Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office, 6010 Hidden Valley Road, Carlsbad, California 92011, or by facsimile to 760-431-9624. Comments may also

be sent by electronic mail to FW8cfwocomments@fws.gov. Written requests for a public hearing will be accepted until XXXXXX XX, 2007.

A copy of the proposed rule and other information about Nevin's barberry plants is available on the Internet at <http://www.fws.gov/carlsbad>, or by contacting the Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office at 760-431-9440. A draft economic analysis of the proposed critical habitat is in preparation and will be released for public review and comment at a later date.

Critical habitat is a term defined in the Endangered Species Act (ESA). It refers to specific geographic areas that are essential to the conservation of a threatened or endangered species and which may require special management considerations or protection. The designation of critical habitat will help ensure federal agencies and the public are aware of the Nevin's barberry's habitat needs and proper consultation is conducted by federal agencies when required by law. A critical habitat designation does not set up a preserve or refuge and only applies to situations where federal funding or a federal permit is involved. It does not allow government or public access to private land. Federal agencies that undertake, fund or permit activities that may affect critical habitat are required to consult with the Service to ensure such actions do not adversely modify or destroy designated critical habitat.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 63 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American Tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to State fish and wildlife agencies.

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