

Department of the Interior
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office
Hidden Valley Road
Carlsbad, California 92009
Phone: 760/431-9440
Fax: 760/431-9624

News Release



<http://carlsbad.fws.gov>

(SC)

04-123

Contact: Jane Hendron, Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office – 760/431-9440 ext. 205

For Release: December 8, 2004

CRITICAL HABITAT PROPOSED FOR THREAD-LEAVED BRODIAEA PLANT

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service published today a proposed rule to designate approximately 4,690 acres of land in Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and San Diego counties as critical habitat for the federally threatened Thread-leaved brodiaea.

Thread-leaved brodiaea, a purple-flowered member of the lily family, is generally found at elevations between 100 feet and 2,500 feet above sea level in clay soils or soils with a clay subsurface.

Based on a review of known occurrence records and suitable habitat identified in scientific literature, research and survey reports, and other sources of information, the Service determined that 9,403 acres of land is eligible for designation as critical habitat.

“We are actively seeking comment and information about the plant and its habitat, and current or planned activities in areas proposed as critical habitat,” said Steve Thompson, of the Service’s California/Nevada Operations Office. “This information will help us prepare a draft economic analysis and develop a final designation.”

Public comments on the proposed rule will be accepted until February 7, 2005 and should be submitted in writing to the Field Supervisor, Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office, 6010 Hidden Valley Road, Carlsbad, California 92009. Comments may also be faxed to 760-431-9618, or sent by e-mail to fw1cfwo_brfi@fws.gov. Requests for a public hearing will be accepted until January 24, 2005.

Areas proposed as critical habitat include 31 occurrences of the plant and contain specific habitat components the plant requires for growth, reproduction and germination; maintenance of its seed bank, and gene flow. Lands proposed as critical habitat are identified in 10 separate geographic units.

Most of the land proposed as critical habitat is privately owned with the remaining areas managed by Federal, State, or local agencies.

The Service identified but excluded from proposed critical habitat areas covered by Habitat Conservation Plans, Integrated Natural Resource Management Plans, and crucial military training areas. The Service is requesting public comment on whether these exclusions should be continued in the final 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. The designation of critical habitat does not affect land ownership or establish a refuge, wilderness, reserve, preserve, or other conservation area. It does not allow government or public access to private lands.

This proposed rule was prepared pursuant to a court order resulting from a lawsuit filed against the Service by the California Native Plant Society, and the Center for Biological Diversity.

In 30 years of implementing the ESA, the Service has found that the designation of critical habitat provides little additional protection to most listed species, while preventing the Service from using scarce conservation resources for activities with greater conservation benefits.

In almost all cases, recovery of listed species will come through voluntary cooperative partnerships, not regulatory measures such as critical habitat. Habitat is also protected through cooperative measures under the ESA including Habitat Conservation Plans, Safe Harbor Agreements, Candidate Conservation Agreements and state programs. In addition, voluntary partnership programs such as the Service's Private Stewardship Grants and Partners for Fish and Wildlife program also restore habitat. Habitat for endangered species is provided on many national wildlife refuges, managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and state wildlife management areas.

A copy of the proposed rule and other information about thread-leaved brodiaea can be accessed through the Internet at <http://carslabd.fws.gov>, or by contacting the Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office at 760-431-9440.

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 544 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 63 Fish and Wildlife Management 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 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.

- FWS -

For more information about the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, visit our home page at www.fws.gov