

Department of the Interior  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office  
6010 Hidden Valley Road  
Carlsbad, California 92011  
Phone: 760/431-9440  
Fax: 760/431-9624

# News Release



<http://carlsbad.fws.gov>

(SC)

05-143

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

For Release: November 30, 2005

## **U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE TAKES SECOND LOOK AT STATUS OF PEIRSON'S MILK-VETCH**

### **New Petition to Remove Plant from Endangered Species List Provides Substantial Information**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced today that a new petition to remove the threatened Peirson's milk vetch (*Astragalus magdalenae* var. *peirsonii*) from its current listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) provides substantial information indicating such action may be warranted. The Service will now initiate a 12-month status review of Peirson's milk vetch, a desert plant found only in portions of the Algodones Dunes in Imperial County, California, to determine whether the plant should be proposed for delisting.

In 2001, the Service was initially petitioned by the American Sand Association, the Off-Road Business Association, and the San Diego Off-Road Coalition to delist the plant. Based on the Service's finding that the petition contained substantial information, a complete review of the plant's status was undertaken. In 2004, the Service published its finding that the plant still warranted protection under the ESA.

The most recent delisting petition was submitted to the Service on July 30, 2005, by the American Sand Association, the Off-Road Business Association, and the American Motorcycle Association – District 37. The 2005 petition asserts that based on four years of additional data collection, Peirson's milk-vetch is more abundant than was reported in the 2001 petition and that the plant's population and reproductive capacity are stable and strong enough to warrant delisting.

Today's finding does not affect other ongoing activities related to the protection and management of the Peirson's milk-vetch, nor does it constitute a decision to delist the plant.

Peirson's milk-vetch, a member of the pea family, grows from 8 to 27 inches tall and has pale purple flowers. The plant is found only in portions of the Algodones Dunes, a sand dune formation that is about 40 miles long, running northwest to southeast, and approximately 5-8 miles wide. Within the dunes, the plant is found in scattered occurrences based on the slope of the dunes, patterns of annual rainfall, and other habitat factors. The Service listed Peirson's milk-vetch as a threatened species due to habitat

degradation, impacts associated with off-road vehicles, and the inadequacy of regulatory mechanisms to conserve the plant.

The Algodones Dunes is managed by the Bureau of Land Management and includes some of the most heavily used off-road vehicle recreation areas in the United States. A portion of the area occupied by the milk-vetch is wilderness, where no vehicle use is allowed.

Comments and information regarding the status of the plant will be accepted until January 30, 2006, and should be submitted in writing to the Field Supervisor, Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office, 6010 Hidden Valley Road, Carlsbad, CA 92011. Comments may also be submitted by facsimile to 760-431-9618, or be electronic mail to **FW1PMV@fws.gov**.

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, 64 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 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.

- FWS -

*For more information about the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, visit our home page at [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov)*