

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: 760/431-9618

News Release



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

For Release: July 27, 2007

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

REVISED CRITICAL HABITAT PROPOSED FOR PEIRSON'S MILK-VETCH

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) today published a proposed rule to revise critical habitat for the federally threatened Peirson's milk-vetch plant. The new proposal includes approximately 16,108 acres within the Algodones Dunes in Imperial County, California, almost all of which is managed by the Bureau of Land Management as part of the Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area (ISDRA).

Areas included in the revised critical habitat proposal support at least 100 plants per hectare and dune bowls that are no more than 100 meters from each core plant population.

The proposed critical habitat includes portions of the Buttercup, Gecko, Glamis, Mammoth Wash, and Ogilby Management Areas within the ISDRA, as well as parts of the Adaptive Management Area and the North Algodones Wilderness.

A new draft economic analysis of the revised proposal estimates potential future impacts associated with reductions in off-highway use in the ISDRA, administrative costs to government agencies and other costs could range from \$1.02 million to \$92.8 million over the next 20 years (using undiscounted dollars).

Public hearings on the proposed rule and draft economic analysis will take place on August 23, 2007, from 1-3 p.m. and 6-8 p.m. at the Service's Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office.

A copy of the proposed rule, draft economic analysis and other information about Peirson's milk-vetch is available on the Internet at <http://www.fws.gov/Carlsbad>. Comments may be submitted in writing to the Field Supervisor, Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office, 6010 Hidden Valley Road, Carlsbad, CA 92011, or by electronic mail to fw8cfwocomments@fws.gov.

Comments on the proposed rule will be accepted until September 25, 2007.

Peirson's milk-vetch is a perennial member of the legume family. It has a long tap root that can penetrate deep into the sand to reach moisture and functions as an anchor for the plant in shifting sands.

The plant has delicate pale purple flowers and produces large fruits each containing 11 to 16 flattened black seeds. Plants may flower in their first year and produce between one and five fruits, while older plants produce significantly more fruits.

This new proposed critical habitat designation stems from a lawsuit filed against the Service by the Center for Biological Diversity, Sierra Club, Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, and Desert Survivors challenging the economic analysis that was prepared for the original 2004 critical habitat designation.

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 97-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 547 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 63 fishery resource 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.

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