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## **Conservation Success: Tennessee Purple Coneflower Delisted**

Thanks to the efforts of many partners who have worked together for more than 30 years to expand and protect this sunflower's colonies, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is removing the Tennessee purple coneflower from the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants in 30 days, by September 2, 2011. This plant is found in the limestone barrens and cedar glades of Davidson, Rutherford, and Wilson Counties.

"The recovery of the Tennessee purple coneflower represents the best in endangered species conservation," Interior Secretary Ken Salazar said. "When this plant faced extinction, the people of Tennessee - from private partners to landowners to federal and state fish and wildlife agencies - rolled up their sleeves to bring it back from the brink. They all played key roles in helping conserve an important part of our nation's natural heritage. Today, we can celebrate an endangered species success story thanks to their years of hard work and dedication."

"The Tennessee coneflower's recovery is an example of what can be achieved through the combined efforts of dedicated partners," said Cindy Dohner, the Service's Southeast Regional Director. "This success story is due to the proactive, long-term, recovery efforts of the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, The Nature Conservancy, the Tennessee Division of Forestry, the National Park Service, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the Service."

The Tennessee purple coneflower now exists in 35 colonies; 15 of these are wild colonies, and 20 were established through introductions of seed or nursery propagated plants. Nineteen of the 35 colonies are considered secure from threats and are self-sustaining. Many of these secure colonies are protected in Designated State Natural Areas which are primarily owned and managed by the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC). One protected colony is located on private lands, and others occur on lands administered by the National Park Service and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The 19 secure Tennessee coneflower colonies are distributed among six populations, five of which contain three or more colonies. The coneflower's recovery plan calls for the species to exist in five secure, or protected populations, consisting of at least three self-sustaining colonies each, for it to be delisted. In June 1979, when the coneflower was listed as endangered under the Act, the plant was only found in small populations in Davidson, Rutherford, and Wilson counties. Now, the number and distribution of stable Tennessee coneflower populations have increased rangewide, these populations are adequately protected through management and regulations, and the threats to these populations are eliminated or reduced.

Among the leaders responsible for the Tennessee coneflower's recovery is TDEC. The state agency bought or secured sites and established Designated State Natural Areas to protect the species. It also built fences to protect coneflower colonies from outdoor recreational vehicle damage, removed competing vegetation, and used prescribed burns at many sites to improve habitat conditions.

When Tennessee purple coneflower is removed from the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants, federal agencies will no longer need to consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure any action they authorize, fund, or carry out is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of this species. The Service will work with TDEC to implement a post-delisting monitoring plan for at least five years.

The final delisting rule is being published in the *Federal Register* today. The rule and post delisting monitoring plan are on the Cookeville Ecological Services Field Office website at <http://www.fws.gov/cookeville/>. Copies of the rule and post-delisting monitoring plan also are available by contacting Geoff Call, recovery coordinator, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 446 Neal Street, Cookeville, Tennessee 38501 (telephone 931/528-6481, extension 213; facsimile 931/528-7075).

Tennessee purple coneflower is in the genus *Echinacea*, which includes several purple coneflower species commercially marketed for ornamental and medicinal purposes. The Tennessee purple coneflower can be found commercially for landscaping purposes, but most often these plants are hybrids. The Tennessee purple coneflower is not among the primary species of *Echinacea* that are used or studied for medicinal purposes.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. For more information, visit <http://www.fws.gov> or <http://www.fws.gov/southeast>.