

NEWS RELEASE

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Service Protects Three Plants Under Endangered Species Act

Three rare plants found in Alabama, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky and Tennessee are now protected under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). This protection becomes final on September 2, 2014, 30 days after publication in the *Federal Register*. The plants, which are listed as endangered, are the fleshy-fruit gladeceess, whorled sunflower, and Short's bladderpod.

Short's bladderpod is found in Posey County, Indiana; Clark, Franklin, and Woodford Counties Kentucky; and Cheatham, Davidson, Dickson, Jackson, Montgomery, Smith, and Trousdale Counties, Tennessee. The whorled sunflower is found in Floyd County, Georgia; Cherokee County, Alabama, and Madison and McNairy Counties, Tennessee. The fleshy-fruit gladeceess is found in Lawrence and Morgan Counties, Alabama.

The Service proposed the three plants for protection last summer due to habitat loss caused by road maintenance and construction; development; industrial forestry and agricultural practices; water-level fluctuations in reservoirs; off-road vehicle use; and competition from native and invasive non-native plants. In addition, many of the plants' populations are small, making them less resilient to threats and vulnerable to loss of genetic variation.

The Service held one comment period, August 2, 2013, to allow the public to review and give feedback on our proposal to list these plants. All relevant information received from the public, government agencies, the scientific community, industry, and other interested parties was considered and addressed in the agency's final listing determination. The decisions to add these plants to the Endangered Species List are based on the best scientific information available. For more information, please see <http://www.regulations.gov>, docket number FWS-R4-ES-2013-0087.

The ultimate goal of the ESA is the recovery of these listed plants so that they no longer need protection under the ESA. The next step is to develop recovery plans that provide guidance for the Service and its conservation partners to address threats to the plants' survival and recovery.

Federal landowners must comply with provisions of the ESA to protect these plants on their land. It is unlawful to remove from federal lands plants that are listed as endangered under the ESA, or to import, export, or sell such plants without first consulting with the Service.

Landowners interested in helping the Service recover the Short's bladderpod and the whorled sunflower, or who would like more information about the potential implications of the listing

should contact Geoff Call in the Service's Tennessee Field Office at 931-525-4983, or via e-mail at Geoff_Call@fws.gov. For fleshy fruit gladeceess, please contact Shannon Holbrook in the Service's Alabama Field Office at 251-441-5871, or via e-mail at Shannon_Holbrook@fws.gov

An example of the Service's efforts to work with landowners to conserve species is its partnership with Plum Creek, a land and timber company, to protect the whorled sunflower. In Georgia, Plum Creek has partnered with the Nature Conservancy to cooperatively manage the Coosa Valley Prairie property which protects most of Georgia's population of the sunflower, while allowing for sustainable timber harvesting.

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 www.fws.gov. Connect with our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/usfwssoutheast, follow our tweets at www.twitter.com/usfwssoutheast, watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwssoutheast>

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