

News Release

Midwest Region



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News Release
September 21, 2016

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Service Proposes Protections for Rusty Patched Bumble Bee Under Endangered Species Act

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will propose the rusty patched bumble bee as endangered under the Endangered Species Act, citing a steep decline in the species' numbers throughout its range. The rusty patched bumble bee, once widespread, is now found in scattered, small populations in 12 states and one Canadian province.

Twenty years ago, the rusty patched bumble bee was an abundant native pollinator found across a broad geographic range that included 28 states and the District of Columbia, from Connecticut to South Dakota and north into two provinces in Canada. The rusty patched bumble bee is now found only in Illinois, Indiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia, Wisconsin – and Ontario, Canada. Abundance and distribution of rusty patched bumble bee populations have declined by an estimated 91 percent since the mid to late 1990s.

Threats to the rusty patched bumble bee include disease (for example, from infected commercial honeybee colonies), exposure to pesticides, habitat loss, the effects of climate change, the effects of extremely small populations, and a combination of these factors.

Bumble bees such as the rusty patched are important pollinators of plants and wildflowers that provide food and habitat for other wildlife. They are also the chief pollinator of many economically important crops. Bumble bees are able to fly in cooler temperatures and lower light levels than many other bees, such as honey bees, making them excellent pollinators for crops like tomatoes, peppers and cranberries. Even where crops can be self-pollinated, the plant produces more and bigger fruits when pollinated by bumble bees.

The ESA helps focus resources, attention and collaborations on behalf of imperiled species and inspires proactive conservation efforts. The Service has been actively working with partners to prevent the extinction of pollinators by locating, protecting and restoring existing habitat. Long-term strategies for the rusty patched bumble bee may also include captive rearing and research.

There are also timely actions that citizens, communities and landowners can take to conserve and restore rusty patched bumble bees. For populations located in urban areas, citizens can plant native flowers that bloom throughout the growing season and leave flowers on the stem as long as possible, especially in fall. This provides bees with needed resources for making it through the winter and for producing new colonies in the

spring. For populations on or near agricultural lands, landowners can refrain from haying in early fall and follow best management practices for pesticide use.

The Service's proposal to list the rusty patched bumble bee is published in the September 22, 2016, *Federal Register*. Comments on the proposal are accepted through November 21, 2016. Following the close of the comment period, the Service will evaluate any new information and make a determination on whether to list the species.

You may submit comments by one of the following methods:

- Electronically: Go to the federal eRulemaking Portal at <http://www.regulations.gov>. In the Search box, enter FWS-R3-ES-2015-0112, which is the docket number for this rulemaking. Then, in the Search panel on the left side of the screen, under the Document Type heading, click on the Proposed Rules link to locate this document. You may submit a comment by clicking on "Comment Now!"
- Submit hard copies by U.S. mail or hand-delivery to:

Public Comments Processing
Attn: FWS-R3-ES-2015-0112
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Headquarters, MS: BPHC
5275 Leesburg Pike
Falls Church, VA 22041-3803

We will accept and consider comments and information we receive or postmarked on or before November 21, 2016. We must receive comments submitted electronically using the federal eRulemaking Portal by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on the closing date.

To see the Service's proposal to list the rusty patched bumble bee and learn more about the species go to www.fws.gov/midwest/angered/insects/rpbb

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. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit <http://www.fws.gov>.

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