

NEWS RELEASE

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Contacts: Lee Andrews, Jr., [Lee\\_Andrews@fws.gov](mailto:Lee_Andrews@fws.gov), 502/695-0468, ext. 108

Tom MacKenzie, [Tom\\_MacKenzie@fws.gov](mailto:Tom_MacKenzie@fws.gov), 404/679-7291

## **Fish and Wildlife Service Proposes to List Kentucky Glade Cress and Designate Critical Habitat**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposes to list the Kentucky glade cress as threatened throughout its narrow range under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The mustard plant is only found in Bullitt and Jefferson Counties, where the Service also is proposing to designate about 2,053 acres as the plant's critical habitat.

“The Kentucky glade cress is one of Kentucky's rarest plants, and it exists on the outskirts of the rapidly growing metro Louisville area,” said Lee Andrews, supervisor of the Service’s Kentucky Field Office. “We hope that landowners and local governments will help us conserve this plant and its habitat through improved management and land protection efforts.”

A small, winter annual with a white to lilac colored flower, the glade cress grows in areas with flat, thin soil, such as cedar glades. It needs sunny areas with green, leafy vegetation that are wet in late winter to early spring, but then dry quickly. Natural areas surrounding the glades that are protected from disturbance are critical to maintaining the plant’s habitat.

The entire range of Kentucky glade cress is currently undergoing rapid residential and commercial development as the greater Louisville metropolitan area expands southward into southern Jefferson and northeastern Bullitt Counties. New residential developments are being added throughout the plant's range, along with associated road and utility construction.

Residential and commercial development and associated activities (e.g., grading, paving, sod farms, mowing, grazing, spraying) have destroyed and/or significantly degraded the preferred natural glade habitats for the Kentucky glade cress and left the majority of known occurrences occupying moderately to severely degraded sites, such as roadside rock outcrops, lawns, and heavily grazed pastures. The few remaining “natural” populations (those occurring in somewhat natural glades) are privately-owned, unprotected, and severely threatened by the same development pressures that have degraded or destroyed other occurrences and habitats for the Kentucky glade cress. The exceptions to this are Apple Valley Glade and Pine Creek Barrens, which are in conservation ownership by the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission and The Nature Conservancy, respectively.

Six units containing areas occupied by the glade cress are being proposed as its critical habitat. These include 18 acres within the McNeely Lake critical habitat unit; 1,014 acres within the three subunits that comprise the Old Mans Run critical habitat unit; and 42 acres within the four subunits that comprise the Mount Washington critical habitat unit. The other three critical habitat units include 547 acres within eight subunits that comprise the Cedar Creek critical habitat unit; 58 acres within the two subunits that comprise the Cox Creek critical habitat unit and 374 acres within the Rocky Run critical habitat unit. In total, approximately 2,053 acres fall within the boundaries of the proposed critical habitat designation.

“We are mailing advanced letters to all of the known landowners within the proposed Kentucky glade cress critical habitat units,” Andrews said. “We hope that they will realize the importance of the resources that they have and work with us to help conserve this native Kentucky plant. We especially want to recognize the work of the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission and The Nature Conservancy for their work to permanently conserve some of the best Kentucky glade cress populations that remain. Hopefully, their work will serve as a model for other conservation-minded landowners.”

The ESA requires the Service to identify the location of habitat essential for the conservation of the species, called “critical habitat.” This identification helps federal agencies identify actions that may affect listed species or their habitat, and to work with the Service to avoid or minimize those impacts. Identifying this habitat also helps raise awareness of the habitat needs of imperiled species and focuses the conservation efforts of other partners such as state and local governments, non-governmental organizations, and individual landowners.

Although non-federal lands are included in the areas proposed as critical habitat for the glade cress, activities on these lands will not necessarily be affected unless they are authorized, funded, or carried out by a federal agency. In such cases, the lead federal agency will need to consult with the Service to ensure actions do not jeopardize the plant or adversely modify its critical habitat.

The Service’s identification of proposed critical habitat areas is based on the best scientific information available, and considers all relevant information provided by the public, government agencies, the scientific community, industry, and other interested parties during a 60-day comment period.

The public may mail comments and materials concerning the proposed listing of the Kentucky glade cress as threatened to Public Comments Processing, Attn:FWS-R4-ES-2013-0069, Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, MS 2042–PDM; Arlington, VA 22203. Comments also can be filed electronically at <http://www.regulations.gov>, using the docket number listed above. Comments concerning the plant’s proposed critical habitat designation should be sent to Attn: FWS-R4-ES-2013-0015 at the same address as above.

All comments must be received by July 23, 2013, and must include a first and last name, city, state, country and zip code. Any comments and materials we receive, as well as supporting documentation used in preparing this proposed rule, will be available for public inspection on

<http://www.regulations.gov> , or by appointment during normal business hours, at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service office in Frankfort, KY.

Requests for a public hearing must be made in writing by July 8, 2013, to the Arlington, VA, address shown immediately above.

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. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit [www.fws.gov/southeast](http://www.fws.gov/southeast). Connect with us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/usfwssoutheast](http://www.facebook.com/usfwssoutheast), follow our tweets at [www.twitter.com/usfwssoutheast](http://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>.