

News Release



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U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE TO REVIEW 8 ENDANGERED SPECIES DECISIONS

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today announced plans to review and take further action, as appropriate, for eight decisions made under the Endangered Species Act, after questions were raised about the integrity of the scientific information used and whether the decisions made were consistent with appropriate legal standards.

The decisions in question were overseen by former Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, Julie MacDonald, who resigned May 1, 2007. Deputy Secretary of the Interior Lynn Scarlett asked Fish and Wildlife Service Director H. Dale Hall in May 2007 to review decisions overseen by MacDonald to determine if any of the decisions require revision based on her involvement. The Service reviewed hundreds of actions and identified 8 decisions that require further review.

“The integrity of the Endangered Species Act and the decisions made under its authority depend on the rigorous and impartial analysis of scientific evidence, as well as consistent application of the legal standards of the Act and our regulations,” said Hall. “When I became Director I made scientific integrity my highest priority, and these reviews underscore our commitment to species conservation.”

Soon after his confirmation as director in October 2005, Director Hall began to examine how endangered species rules were being reviewed in Washington. During a 29-year career with the Fish and Wildlife Service, Hall personally worked on more than 400 endangered species decisions. He relied on that experience to identify problems with the division of responsibilities between the Fish and Wildlife Service’s headquarters and the Assistant Secretary’s Office, and took action to preserve the integrity of endangered species decisions.

With the support of Deputy Secretary Scarlett, Director Hall met with senior departmental staff and reached an agreement in February 2006 that established clear procedures and areas of responsibility for the review and approval of Endangered Species Act decisions.

That same month, Director Hall sent a memorandum to the Service leadership outlining these procedures and requiring draft rules to be approved by the Director's office before they were shared with the Assistant Secretary's office.

"Secretary Kempthorne and I are strongly committed to scientific integrity at the Department of the Interior. I believe we are taking positive steps in this regard," said Deputy Interior Secretary Scarlett.

The Service had already begun reviewing the following decisions. The original date of publication is also included.

- **White-tailed prairie dog**, 90-day petition finding (November 9, 2004)
- **Preble's meadow jumping mouse**, 12 month petition finding/proposed delisting (January 28, 2005)
- **12 species of Hawaiian picture-wing flies**, proposed critical habitat (August 15, 2006)

The decisions requiring additional review and the dates of their original publication are as follows:

- **Preble's meadow jumping mouse**, final critical habitat (June 23, 2003)
- **Arroyo toad**, final critical habitat (April 13, 2005)
- **Southwestern willow flycatcher**, final critical habitat (October 19, 2005)
- **California red-legged frog**, final critical habitat (April 13, 2006)
- **Canada lynx**, final critical habitat (November 9, 2006)

Although MacDonald worked on other Endangered Species Act decisions, the review determined that her involvement in the outcome of those decisions did not affect the species' status. Many other decisions influenced by MacDonald involved application of law and policy that were within her authority to make as deputy assistant secretary.

"We have acted to correct problems. Should our reviews indicate that additional corrective actions are necessary, we will take appropriate action as quickly as we can," added Hall.

For more information on the decisions to be reviewed, please visit the Service's Endangered Species Program website at <http://www.fws.gov/angered/>

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 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 548 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 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 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,
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