

# NEWS RELEASE

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Idaho Fish and Wildlife Office - 1387 S. Vinnell Way, Room 368, Boise, Idaho 83709

208-378-5243

[www.fws.gov/idaho](http://www.fws.gov/idaho)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**October 1, 2009**

**R1#09-118**

Contact: Jeff Foss, 208-378-5243

## **Slickspot Peppergrass to be Listed as Threatened throughout its Range**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today announced that a final Rule will publish next week to protect slickspot peppergrass (*Lepidium papilliferum*), a native plant found only in southwest Idaho, as a threatened species protected under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

The Service also determined that designation of critical habitat for the plant is prudent but not determinable at this time. As soon as the Rule publishes, federal protections provided by the ESA will become effective in 60 days.

“We have carefully assessed the best scientific information available, as well as public comments, regarding the past, present and future threats to slickspot peppergrass,” said Jeff Foss, Idaho State Supervisor for the Service. “Evidence indicates that the sagebrush-steppe habitat of this species continues to degrade in quality. In particular, the most significant threats are the effects of more frequent wildfires and invasive nonnative plants, including cheatgrass. These threats will continue and likely will increase into the

foreseeable future. We commend the efforts of the Bureau of Land Management, State of Idaho, Idaho Army National Guard, U.S. Air Force, and ranchers to conserve slickspot peppergrass, and their continued involvement will be key to recovering this species.”

Approximately 98 percent of the slickspot peppergrass population occurs on federal land managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Department of Defense. Less than one percent of the population occurs on state land and approximately 1.6 percent is found on private lands. Military lands containing slickspot peppergrass include the Juniper Butte Training Range, managed by the Mountain Home U.S. Air Force Base, and the Orchard Training Area, managed by the Idaho Army National Guard and BLM.

The ESA defines a threatened species as “any species which is likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range.” The Service determined that threats to the species rangewide do not immediately threaten it with extinction but, if they continue as anticipated and are not addressed, they are likely to result in the species becoming endangered in the foreseeable future.

When a species is added to the federal list of threatened and endangered species, it is protected from adverse effects of federal activities through the ESA Section 7 consultation process. Restrictions are placed on taking, selling or transporting the species. The Service develops a recovery plan for the species and can provide financial assistance to states to help with the species’ conservation and recovery. Federal agencies, including the Service, must ensure that activities they authorize, fund or implement are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of a listed species or adversely modify its designated critical habitat. Only federal agencies are required to take steps to conserve listed species. Other entities and private landowners are encouraged to support and carry out recovery goals for listed species but are not required to do so.

Slickspot peppergrass is unique to southwest Idaho, and it is found only in parts of the Snake River Plain, the Boise Foothills, and on the Owyhee Plateau. The herbaceous plant is a member of the mustard family, and it has numerous tiny white flowers that resemble the garden flower sweet alyssum. The plant occurs primarily in unique soil conditions that are dispersed within a semiarid sagebrush-steppe habitat.

The final Rule listing the plant as threatened will be available on the Internet at

<http://www.regulations.gov> and <http://www.fws.gov/idaho>. The public will be notified when the Rule publishes. Comments and materials received, as well as supporting documentation used in the preparation of this rule, will be available for public inspection by appointment during normal business hours at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Idaho Fish and Wildlife Office, 1387 S. Vinnell Way, Boise, Idaho 83709; by telephone at 208-378-5243; by facsimile at 208-378-5262; or by e-mail at [fw1srbocomment@fws.gov](mailto:fw1srbocomment@fws.gov).

For further information, please contact Jeff Foss, State Supervisor, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Idaho Fish and Wildlife Office, 208-378-5243.

*The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife and 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 [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov).*

-- FWS --