

News Release



Idaho Fish and Wildlife Office
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Slickspot Peppergrass Draft Economic Analysis Released

Draft Economic Analysis and Proposed Critical Habitat

Comment Period Closes on December 12, 2011

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) announced today the release of a draft analysis of the economic impacts of proposed critical habitat designation for slickspot peppergrass (*Lepidium papilliferum*).

Slickspot peppergrass has been protected as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) since 2009. The rare plant is unique to southwest Idaho, and it is found only in parts of the Snake River Plain, the Boise Foothills and the Owyhee Plateau. In May, 2011, the Service proposed the designation of 57,756 acres as critical habitat for the plant's protection in Idaho's Ada, Elmore, Owyhee and Payette Counties.

When critical habitat designation is proposed, ESA requires the Service to consider economic and other relevant impacts of the proposed designation. The publication of the draft economic analysis provides the public an opportunity to provide input on the impacts, as well as the proposed critical habitat designation.

“Designating critical habitat is an additional step under the ESA that helps us to focus on species recovery. Our next step is continue to work with our partners to ensure that conservation actions are best directed to successful recovery in the future,” said Brian Kelly, Idaho State Supervisor for the Service.

With the release of the draft economic analysis, a 45-day comment period opens for public review and input. At the same time, the public is also provided an additional opportunity to comment on the proposed critical habitat designation. Comments previously submitted on the proposed critical habitat rule do not need to be resubmitted. The comment period for the economic analysis and the proposed critical habitat designation for slickspot peppergrass closes December 12, 2011.

Approximately 95 percent of the proposed critical habitat areas is on public lands (49,473 acres Bureau of Land Management, 160 acres Bureau of Reclamation, 4,561 acres State of Idaho, 840 acres County), with the remaining 2,722 acres under private ownership.

The economic analysis is based on current management of public lands that contain slickspot peppergrass, and it estimates foreseeable potential economic impacts related to proposed critical habitat designation to be \$14,200 annually, or \$161,000 over a 20-year period. These economic impacts are primarily additional administrative costs of section 7 consultations for Federal agencies.

Privately-owned lands are included in the proposal, but the Service is considering excluding those lands from critical habitat designation. Military lands with approved conservation plans, known as Integrated Natural Resource Management Plans (INRMPs), that provide a benefit to the species are also proposed to be exempt from designation. After considering public input and other best available information, the Service will determine if the benefits of exclusion outweigh the benefits of inclusion in the final critical habitat rule.

Written comments concerning the draft economic analysis and proposed critical habitat can be submitted by one of the following methods:

- Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>. In the box that reads “Enter Keyword or ID,” enter this Docket Number: FWS-R1-ES-2010-0071. Then, click the “Search” button. An icon will appear that reads “Submit a Comment.” Please ensure that the correct rulemaking document number is found before submitting your comments.
- U.S. mail or hand-delivery: Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS-R1-ES-2010-0071; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, MS 2042–PDM; Arlington, VA 22203.

Comments must be received within 45 days, on or before December 12, 2011. Please note that if you are using the Federal eRulemaking Portal, the deadline for submitting an electronic comment is Eastern Standard Time on this date. The Service will post all comments on <http://www.regulations.gov>. This generally means the agency will post personal information provided through the process. The Service is not able to accept email or faxes.

For additional information, contact Susan Burch, Biologist, 1387 S. Vinnell Way, Room 368, Boise, Idaho 83709; 208-378-5265; susan_burch@fws.gov. Comments and materials received, as well as supporting documentation used in the preparation of this rule, are available for public inspection by appointment during normal business hours.

A copy of the proposed rule, maps, draft economic analysis and other information about slickspot peppergrass is available online at <http://www.fws.gov/idaho>.

America's fish, wildlife and plant resources belong to all of us, and ensuring the health of imperiled species is a shared responsibility. We're working to actively engage conservation partners and the public in the search for improved and innovative ways to conserve and recover imperiled species. To learn more about the Endangered Species Program, go to <http://www.fws.gov/endangered>.

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 www.fws.gov.

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