



# U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

## *News Release*

### **Great Lakes Region**

5600 American Boulevard West  
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### **Draft Recovery Plan for Rusty Patched Bumble Bee Available for Comment**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is seeking public comment on a draft plan to recover the rusty patched bumble bee, a species listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in 2017. The draft plan outlines general management actions and criteria that indicate when the species may be considered recovered and eligible to be removed from the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife.

Recovery plans are used by federal and state agencies and conservation partners to guide voluntary actions to recover threatened and endangered species to the point that ESA protections are no longer needed. The draft plan for the rusty patched bumble bee includes actions such as land management to improve habitat quality and measures to reduce exposure to pesticides and disease-causing pathogens.

Historically, the bee was broadly distributed across the eastern and upper Midwest United States. Prior to listing, the species experienced a widespread and precipitous decline, with populations plummeting by approximately 87 percent in the past two decades. The species is now found in small, scattered populations in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Ohio, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin and Ontario, Canada.

The cause of the species' drastic decline is unknown, but evidence suggests a harmful interaction between a disease-causing pathogen and exposure to pesticides. Other threats to the insect include habitat loss and degradation, competition and disease introduction from commercial bees, and climate change.

The rusty patched bumble bee lives in colonies, which are formed by solitary queens emerging from overwintering sites. The species needs nectar-producing flowers for food, undisturbed nesting habitat near food sources, and overwintering habitat to survive.

The Service is working with states, tribes, non-governmental organizations, academia, and private landowners and managers to carry out recovery actions for the bee. The species is a prime example of the larger worldwide decline of pollinators and other insects. Studying and responding to this issue could help scientists understand and address other insect population declines.

The draft recovery plan for the rusty patched bumble bee is available on our [rusty patched bumble bee website](#). Comments will be accepted through February 24, 2020. Instructions on how to submit comments can be found on <http://www.regulations.gov> using docket number FWS-R3-ES-2019-0100.

Comments can also be mailed or hand-delivered to:

Public Comments Processing, Attn: Docket No. FWS-R3-ES-2019-0100; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Headquarters, MS: JAO/1N; 5275 Leesburg Pike; Falls Church, VA 22041-3803.

For additional information about the species and to view the draft recovery plan, visit our [rusty patched bumble bee website](#).

*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 [fws.gov](http://fws.gov).*