

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Mountain-Prairie Region
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Service Reinstates Endangered Species Act Protections for the Preble's Meadow Jumping Mouse in Wyoming

The Preble's meadow jumping mouse (*Zapus hudsonius preblei*) will again be protected in Wyoming under the Endangered Species Act as of August 6, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced today. The Service reinstated protections for the mouse, which is already protected in Colorado, in order to comply with a requested court order.

Preble's populations throughout the species' range in Colorado and Wyoming will be federally protected, with a special rule in place to allow rodent control, agricultural operations, landscape maintenance, noxious weed control, ditch maintenance, and other specified activities to occur provided they are conducted in accordance with the requirements of the special rule.

The Service will work closely with the State of Wyoming and private landowners to minimize the disruption this action will cause. The agency will provide streamlined ESA consultation and identify feasible avoidance and minimization measures in order to facilitate traditional land uses.

The Service will not reinstate its previous designation of critical habitat for the mouse in Wyoming.

In 2008, the Service removed ESA protection for Preble's populations in Wyoming but continued them in Colorado, based on an interpretation of the law that allowed the agency to apply ESA protections to those portions of a species' range where the Service believed it was most threatened, rather than in all the places where it is found. This interpretation rested on a policy definition of the meaning of "in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of the range" (SPR) that was subsequently invalidated by two court rulings. As a result of those rulings, the Service began developing a revised policy regarding the interpretation and implementation of the SPR Language.

In the absence of a new SPR policy, the Service asked the court to remand the Preble's decision back to the agency to allow it to reinstate protections for the mouse in Wyoming. The court granted this request last month.

The Service will conduct a new status review and make a new finding on petitions from the State of Wyoming and Coloradans for Water Conservation and Development seeking to delist Preble's populations in Wyoming by June 2013. The revised finding will be informed by the policy on SPR language, and both the finding and policy will be made available for notice and comment.

The Preble's meadow jumping mouse was first added to the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife in 1998 as a threatened species. The species is threatened by habitat alteration, degradation, loss, and fragmentation resulting from urban development, flood control, water development, agriculture, and other human land uses.

The Preble's is a relatively small rodent with an extremely long tail, large hind feet and long hind legs. The tail is bicolored, lightly furred and typically twice as long as the body. The large hind feet can be one third again as large as those of other mice of similar size. The Preble's has a distinct dark broad stripe on its back that runs from head to tail and is bordered on either side by gray to orange-brown fur. The hair on the back of all jumping mice appears coarse compared to other mice. The underside is white and much finer in texture. Total length of an adult Preble's mouse is approximately 8-10 inches long and more than 60 percent of length is its tail.

The mouse is found in heavily vegetated streamside areas and in adjacent grassland cover in southeastern Wyoming, southward along the eastern edge of the front range of Colorado to Colorado Springs in El Paso County, Colorado. It inhabits well-developed plains riparian vegetation with relatively undisturbed grassland communities and a nearby water source. It has been found to use uplands at least as far out as 100 meters beyond the 100-year flood plain.

A copy of the final rule and other information regarding the Preble's meadow jumping mouse is available at <http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/mammals/preble/> or by contacting the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Wyoming Field Office, 5353 Yellowstone Rd, Suite 308A, Cheyenne, WY 82009, or by phone at: 307-772-2374.

The ESA provides a critical safety net for America's native fish, wildlife and plants. The Service 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, visit <http://www.fws.gov/angered/>.

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