

## NEWS RELEASE

**U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
Mountain-Prairie Region  
134 Union Boulevard  
Lakewood, Colorado 80228**

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**Contact: Patty Gelatt 970-243-2778  
Diane Katzenberger 303-236-4578**

### **Critical Habitat Designation for The Clay-Loving Wild Buckwheat To Be Revised**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today announced that revising the critical habitat designation for the clay-loving wild buckwheat, a native shrub found near Delta and Montrose, Colorado is warranted, but the revision process is precluded at this time by the need to complete other listing actions of a higher priority. The Service plans to prepare a proposed revision when funding is available.

Critical habitat is a term defined in the Endangered Species Act (ESA). It identifies geographic areas containing features essential for the conservation of a threatened or endangered species and may require special management considerations or protection. The designation of critical habitat does not affect land ownership or establish a refuge, wilderness, reserve, preserve, or other conservation area. It does not allow government or public access to private lands.

The clay-loving wild buckwheat (*Eriogonum pelinophilum*), was listed as an endangered species on July 13, 1984 with 119.8 acres designated as critical habitat near Delta, Colorado. The critical habitat designation encompassed what was then the entire known range of the plant.

Since listing, additional populations of the plant have been found near Montrose, Colorado. The 1984 critical habitat designation includes only a small portion of the currently known habitat for the clay-loving wild buckwheat and does not represent the entire area containing the physical and biological features essential to the conservation of the plant.

Until a revision of critical habitat is proposed, areas that support plant populations, but are outside the current designation, will continue to be subject to conservation actions and protections as prescribed under the Endangered Species Act.

Until a proposed revision of the critical habitat designation is prepared, the Service will continue to gather information regarding the distribution of the clay-loving wild buckwheat as well as the biological elements necessary to the conservation of the plant.

The clay-loving wild buckwheat is a low growing, rounded, densely branched shrub in the buckwheat family with dark green leaves that appear needlelike, and clusters of white to cream colored flowers. Flowering typically occurs from late May to early September with individual flowers lasting fewer than three days. The plant is found on rolling clay hills and flats immediately adjacent to the communities of Delta and Montrose, Colorado.

In October, 2006, the Center for Native Ecosystems, the Colorado Native Plant Society, and the Uncompahgre Valley Association petitioned the Service to revise the critical habitat designation for the clay-loving wild buckwheat. The Service advised the petitioners that the petition could not be addressed at that time because existing court orders and settlement agreements for other listing actions required nearly all of the listing funding. Subsequently, the petitioners filed a lawsuit for the Service's failure to make a petition finding. Per a settlement agreement, the Service agreed to submit a petition finding to the Federal Register by June 15, 2009 and submit a status review finding to the Federal Register by September 21, 2009.

For more information regarding the clay-loving wild buckwheat, please visit our web site at <http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/plants>.

Native plants are important for their ecological, economic and aesthetic values. Plants play an important role in development of crops that resist disease, insects and drought. At least 25 percent of prescription drugs contain ingredients derived from plant compounds, including medicine to treat cancer, heart disease, juvenile leukemia and malaria, as well as those used to assist in organ transplants. Plants are also used to develop natural pesticides.

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