

NEWS RELEASE

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Mountain-Prairie Region

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Utah Plants Designated Candidates for Endangered Species Protection

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has determined that that the Frisco buckwheat (*Eriogonum soredium*), Ostler pepperplant (*Lepidium ostleri*), and Frisco clover (*Trifolium friscanum*) warrant protection under the Act, but that proposing the species for listing is precluded by the need to address other high priority species. We have also determined that the Hamilton milkvetch (*Astragalus hamiltonii*) and Flowers' beardtongue (*Penstemon flowersii*) do not warrant protection Act because we found no factors that cause these species to be endangered or threatened.

The Frisco buckwheat, Ostler pepperplant, and Frisco clover are perennial herbs endemic to Beaver and Millard counties in southwestern Utah. We determined that the primary threat to all three species was habitat loss and fragmentation from activities related to mining. All three species are located on Ordovician limestone substrate, which is mined for limestone and precious metals. Other threats included nonnative invasive species, inadequate regulatory mechanisms, and small population size. We have determined that listing the Frisco buckwheat, Ostler pepperplant, and Frisco clover is warranted, but precluded by higher priority actions.

The Hamilton milkvetch and Flowers' beardtongue are perennial, herbaceous plants found only in the northeast corner of Utah in the Uinta Basin. In our analyses, we found no evidence that any factor affects these plants to such a degree that either species meets the definition of threatened or endangered under the Act. Therefore, we determined listing these species at this time is not warranted.

We will add the Frisco buckwheat, Ostler pepperplant, and Frisco clover to our list of candidate species and review their status annually. When we make a "warranted but precluded" finding for a species, we classify the species as a candidate for listing. If we propose the Frisco buckwheat, Ostler pepperplant, or Frisco clover for protection under the Act in the future, the public will have an opportunity to comment.

Because listing the Hamilton milkvetch and Flowers' beardtongue of is not warranted, we will take no further action with these species at this time.

While candidate species receive no statutory protection under the Act, inclusion on the candidate list promotes cooperative conservation efforts for these species. Our ultimate goal, which is

shared by many state wildlife agencies, private organizations and individuals, is to intervene and successfully address the needs of candidate species so that listing is no longer needed.

For example, we provide technical assistance and competitive matching grants to private landowners, states and territories undertaking conservation efforts on behalf of candidate species. We also work with interested landowners to develop Candidate Conservation Agreements. These voluntary agreements allow citizens to manage their property in ways that benefit candidate species, in some cases precluding the need to list the species. These agreements can also be developed to provide regulatory certainty for landowners should the species become listed under the Act.

Addressing the needs of candidate species before the regulatory requirements of the Act come into play often allows greater management flexibility to stabilize or restore these species and their habitats. In addition, as threats are reduced and populations are increased or stabilized, attention can be shifted to those candidate species in greatest need of the Act's protective measures.

We made these five determinations in response to a petition filed July 24, 2007 by Forest Guardians (now WildEarth Guardians) requesting that 206 species ranked as G1 (critically imperiled) or G1G2 (critically imperiled or imperiled) by the organization NatureServe be listed as threatened or endangered under the Act. We completed an initial review of these three species on August 18, 2009 and concluded that the petition contained substantial information supporting a full study of the status for these five species. Today's announcement constitutes our final action on this petition for these species.

A copy of the final rule and other information about the Frisco buckwheat, Ostler pepperplant, and Frisco clover as well as the Hamilton milkvetch and Flowers' beardtongue is available on the Internet at <http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/plants/fiveutahplants> or by contacting the Utah Ecological Services Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2369 West Orton Circle, Suite 50, West Valley City, Utah 84119, phone: (801) 975-3330. The final rule is published in today's Federal Register. Please submit any new information, materials, comments, or questions concerning this finding to the above address.

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. The Service is a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for their scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on the Service's work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov.