



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Washington, D.C. 20240



FEB 14 2014

The Honorable Corey Gardner
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Gardner:

Thank you for your letter of February 4, 2014, regarding potential impacts on the progress of flood recovery efforts in Colorado, due to the federally threatened Preble's meadow jumping mouse (Preble's). Your letter was prompted by talking points released by the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) on February 3, 2014. FEMA's talking points incorrectly stated that the Preble's, a unique and rare small mammal found only in streamside habitats along the Front Range, could delay flood recovery efforts in Colorado. However, in a follow up news release, FEMA and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) clarified that neither FEMA nor the Service have halted or delayed flood recovery efforts. Thus, the waiver you requested so that recovery efforts can move forward as scheduled is not necessary, as the Preble's, and other federally listed species that live in the flood disaster area, have not, and will not, delay Colorado's flood recovery efforts.

As stated in the joint press release, the Service and FEMA are collaboratively working together with our Federal, State, and local partners to expeditiously process, review, and fund Colorado's flood recovery efforts.

The Act recognizes that emergencies, such as the flood disaster in Colorado, require expedited consultation to ensure that federally listed species do not impede or delay response efforts. Emergency consultation is swift, completes regulatory requirements, and allows action agencies to proceed without delay. FEMA and the Service initiated consultation under the Act's emergency consultation provisions, and will continue to consult on an emergency basis on projects needed to address imminent threats to human health or safety.

The Service and FEMA are currently finalizing streamlined programmatic consultation documents that will cover FEMA's reimbursement of non-emergency, permanent repair projects throughout the flood disaster area. These documents will also streamline requirements for the Service and other Federal, State, county, and local partners working in the flood disaster area.

As stated earlier, we are committed to ensuring no species listed under the Endangered Species Act delay flood recovery efforts in Colorado. The Service believes that expediting the requirements of applicable laws, including the Act, is an utmost priority for the Service and FEMA. If you have any additional concerns, feel free to contact me directly or have your staff contact Ms. Noreen Walsh, the Service's Mountain-Prairie Regional Director at 303-236-7920.

Sincerely,

DIRECTOR