

Billing Code 4310-55-P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

[FWS-R6-ES-2008-N188]

[60120-1113-0000; C2]

Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Draft Revised Recovery Plan for Utah Prairie Dog

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of document availability for review and comment.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) announces the availability of a draft revised recovery plan for the Utah prairie dog (*Cynomys parvidens*). This species is federally listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (Act). The Service solicits review and comment from the public on this draft revised plan.

DATES: Comments on the draft revised recovery plan must be received on or before [INSERT DATE 60 DAYS AFTER THE FEDERAL REGISTER PUBLICATION DATE].

ADDRESSES: Copies of the draft revised recovery plan are available by request from the Utah Field Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2369 West Orton Circle, Suite 50, West Valley City, UT 84119; telephone 801-975-3330. Submit comments on the draft recovery plan to the Field Supervisor at this same address. An electronic copy of the draft recovery plan is available at <http://www.fws.gov/endangered/species/recovery-plans.html>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Field Supervisor, at the above address, or telephone 801-975-3330.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Restoring an endangered or threatened animal or plant to the point where it is again a secure, self-sustaining member of its ecosystem is a primary goal of the Service's endangered species program. To help guide the recovery effort, the Service prepares recovery plans for the federally listed species native to the United States where a plan will promote the conservation of the species. Recovery plans describe site-specific

actions necessary for the conservation of the species, establish objective, measurable criteria which, when met, would result in a determination that the species no longer needs the protection of the Act (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), and provide estimates of the time and cost for implementing the needed recovery measures.

The Act requires recovery plans for listed species unless such a plan would not promote the conservation of a particular species. Section 4(f) of the Act, as amended in 1988, requires that public notice and opportunity for public review and comment be provided during recovery plan development. The Service will consider all information received during a public comment period when preparing each new or revised recovery plan for approval. The Service and other Federal agencies also will take these comments into consideration in the course of implementing approved recovery plans. It is our policy to request peer review of recovery plans. We will summarize and respond to the issues raised by the public and peer reviewers in an appendix to the approved recovery plan.

The Utah prairie dog (*Cynomys parvidens*), found only in southwestern and central Utah, was listed as an endangered species on June 4, 1973 (38 FR 14678). At the time of listing, the species was threatened by habitat destruction and modification, overexploitation, disease, and predation. Subsequently, Utah prairie dog populations increased significantly in portions of their range, and on May 29, 1984 (49 FR 22330), the species was reclassified as threatened with a special rule to allow regulated take of the species. This special rule was amended on June 14, 1991 (56 FR 27438), to increase the

amount of regulated take allowed throughout the species' range. Recent Utah prairie dog population trends appear to be relatively stable, although the species remains vulnerable to several serious threats. These include habitat loss, plague, changing climatic conditions, unauthorized take, and disturbance from recreational and economic land uses.

The recovery of Utah prairie dogs will rely on effective conservation responses to the issues facing the species, which remain varied and complex. These issues include plague, urban expansion, grazing, cultivated agriculture, vegetative community changes, invasive plants, off-highway vehicle and recreation uses, climate change, energy resource exploration and development, fire management, poaching, and predation. Strategically, these issues can be reduced to two overriding concerns: loss of habitat and plague. The recovery strategy for the Utah prairie dog focuses on the need to address colony loss and disease through a program that encompasses threats abatement, population management, research, and monitoring. We emphasize conserving extant colonies, many of which occur on non-Federal lands; establishing additional colonies on Federal and non-Federal lands via habitat improvement or translocations; controlling the transmission of plague; and monitoring habitat conditions.

Request for Public Comments

The Service solicits public comments on the draft recovery plan. All comments received by the date specified in **DATES** will be considered prior to approval of the plan. Written comments and materials regarding the plan should be addressed to the Field

Supervisor (see **ADDRESSES** section). Comments and materials received will be available, by appointment, for public inspection during normal business hours at the above address.

Authority

The authority for this action is section 4(f) of the Endangered Species Act, 16 U.S.C. 1533(f).

Dated: August 18, 2010

Hugh Morrison,
Acting Regional Director.

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