



# United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
Ecological Services  
Colorado Field Office  
P.O. Box 25486, DFC (65412)  
Denver, Colorado 80225-0486

IN REPLY REFER TO:

ES/CO: T&E/PMJM/Block Clear  
TAILS 65412-2011-TA-0377

Kirsta Scherff-Norris  
Colorado Springs Utilities  
121 South Tejon Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
PO Box 1103, Mail Code 940  
Colorado Springs, Colorado 80947-0940

Dear Kirsta Scherff-Norris:

This responds to your letter of March 9, 2011 requesting an extension of the existing Cottonwood Creek Block Clearance Zone for the Preble's meadow jumping mouse, *Zapus hudsonius preblei* (Preble's) within Colorado Springs metropolitan area. Based on the authority conferred to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) by the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA), as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), the Service concurs with your conclusion that extension of the existing "block clearance" zone, as depicted in the original exclusion area granted on April 4, 2002, is appropriate.

The Service concurs with the exclusion zone extension: Cottonwood Creek bounded in the west from 40 meters downstream of the centerline of the I-25 bridges (approximately 110 meters upstream of the confluence with Monument Creek) SE ¼ Section 7, Township 13 South, Range 66 West) and in the east by the crossing of Black Forest Road (SE ¼ SE ¼ Section 31, Township 12 South, Range 66 West) including all tributaries to their headwaters.

The continuance of this block clearance zone is based on the likely absence of Preble's within the area, and there appears to be little likelihood that any of the area would be of importance in any future plan to recover the species. Should Preble's be discovered within the block clearance zone it would be subject to full protection under ESA and the Service would consider modification of the zone.

Effective the date of this letter, the block clearance zone will be renewed for an additional three years. After three years the Service will review the clearance, any additional information, and may renew the clearance if deemed appropriate. Based on additional information, the clearance zone may be expanded or adjusted periodically. Maps of the block clearance zone are available at: [http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/mammals/preble/RELATED\\_ACTIONS/RELATEDindex.htm#clearance](http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/mammals/preble/RELATED_ACTIONS/RELATEDindex.htm#clearance) and at our office. We also have the supporting data and summaries of the trapping surveys available as part of the administrative record for this project.

## Cottonwood Creek Clearance Extension

The Service emphasizes that while wetlands and riparian habitats within the block clearance zone do not support Preble's, they should be conserved and enhanced for other values including fish and wildlife habitat, flood control, and maintenance of water quality.

If we can be of further assistance, please contact Adam Misztal of the Colorado Field Office at (303) 236-4753 or at email: adam\_misztal@fws.gov.

Sincerely,

Susan C. Linner  
Colorado Field Supervisor

cc: Federal Highway Administration, CO Federal Aid Division: William Jones  
City of Colorado Springs: Lisa Ross  
El Paso County Environmental Services: Nancy Prieve  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Southern CO Regulatory Office  
FWS/CFO: Pete Plage  
FWS/CFO: Alison Michael