

NEWS RELEASE

**U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Mountain-Prairie Region
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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Announces Availability of the Draft Economic Analysis and Draft Environmental Assessment for the Proposed Revision of Critical Habitat for the Preble's Meadow Jumping Mouse

Service also reopens comment period for the revised critical habitat proposal and draft documents

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today released a draft analysis of the potential economic impacts of a proposal to revise the critical habitat designation for the Preble's meadow jumping mouse and a draft assessment of the environmental effects of the proposal as required under the National Environmental Policy Act. The Service is also reopening the comment period for the proposal to allow interested parties an opportunity to comment on the proposed critical habitat designation as well as the two draft documents.

The Service is proposing to designate approximately 418 miles of rivers and streams and 39,142 acres of adjacent habitat for the Preble's meadow jumping mouse in Colorado where it is listed as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The proposed revised critical habitat is located in Boulder, Broomfield, Douglas, El Paso, Jefferson, Larimer and Teller Counties, Colorado.

The draft economic analysis quantifies the economic impacts of proposed revised critical habitat designation for the Preble's meadow jumping mouse. The draft analysis estimates over the next 20 years, potential economic impacts in areas proposed for critical habitat could range from \$21.4 million to \$52.9 million. Approximately 95 percent of the potential economic impacts attributed to the proposed designation of critical habitat relate to residential and commercial development. These impacts generally consist of administrative costs associated with additional consultation requirements and measures intended to reduce or mitigate impacts from development

Comments on the proposed critical habitat revision as well as the draft economic analysis and draft environmental assessment will be accepted until June 28, 2010.

The critical habitat revised proposal, the draft economic analysis, and draft environmental assessment are available at: <http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/mammals/preble/>

Comments may be submitted by one of the following methods:

- *Federal eRulemaking Portal*: <http://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the instructions for submitting comments to Docket No. FWS-R6-ES-2009-0013.
- *U.S. mail or hand-delivery*: Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS-R6-ES-2009-0013; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 222; Arlington, VA 22203.

Critical habitat, a term in the Endangered Species Act, identifies geographic areas that contain features essential for the conservation of a threatened or endangered species and may require special management or protection. Federal agencies are required to consult with the Fish and Wildlife Service on actions that might affect critical habitat. 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. Designating critical habitat on federal or non-federal land identifies areas that are important to a species' recovery.

Areas proposed as critical habitat for the Preble's meadow jumping mouse provide the following beneficial habitat elements: riparian corridors along rivers and streams that include dense, riparian vegetation, movement corridors that provide connectivity between and within populations, and adjacent floodplain and upland habitat with limited human disturbance.

The Preble's meadow jumping mouse was listed as a threatened species in May 1998 with critical habitat designated in June 2003. The Service is re-examining the critical habitat designation due to concerns that a former political official of the Department of the Interior inappropriately influenced the outcome, resulting in the exclusion of lands in Boulder, Douglas, and El Paso Counties. Stream reaches in these counties were excluded from the 2003 designation based on Habitat Conservation Plans under development; however, none of the plans were near completion at that time. The Service is again proposing critical habitat in those counties and will examine whether any exclusions are appropriate in the final designation.

In July 2008, the Service removed ESA protections, including critical habitat protections, for Preble's meadow jumping mouse populations in Wyoming. The subspecies remains protected as a threatened species in the Colorado portion of its range.

The Preble's meadow jumping mouse is a small mammal with a long tail, large hind feet, and long hind legs. Total length of an adult is approximately 7 to 10 inches, with the tail comprising approximately 60 percent of that length. To evade predators, the mouse can jump up to three feet.

The Preble's meadow jumping mouse is found along the foothills in southeastern Wyoming southward along the eastern edge of the Front Range of Colorado to Colorado Springs in El Paso County, Colorado. It inhabits well-developed riparian vegetation with relatively undisturbed grassland communities and a nearby water source. It has been found to use uplands at least as far out as 100 meters beyond the 100-year flood plain. Habitat alteration, degradation, loss and fragmentation resulting from urban development, flood control, water development and other human land uses have adversely impacted Preble's populations.

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.