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# News Release



**For Immediate Release**  
**Date: August 8, 2006**

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## **U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE TO INITIATE A STATUS REVIEW OF THE SAND MOUNTAIN BLUE BUTTERFLY**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has completed an initial evaluation of a petition to add the Sand Mountain blue butterfly (*Euphilotes pallelescens arenamontana*) to the Federal list of threatened or endangered species and determined that substantial biological information exists to warrant an in-depth examination of the butterfly's status. The finding initiates a 12-month status review of the species. Once the review is complete, the Service will determine whether to propose listing the species as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act.

“Our finding is based on scientific information contained in the petition to list the butterfly,” said Steve Thompson, manager of the California/Nevada Operations Office. “The finding does not mean that the Service has decided it is appropriate to list the Sand Mountain blue butterfly. It is the first step in a process that triggers a more thorough review of all the biological information available. We encourage the public to submit any relevant information about the butterfly and its habitat.”

The Sand Mountain blue butterfly is a small, pale-blue butterfly known only to occur at Sand Mountain, a dune system located in Churchill County, Nevada. The butterfly occurs in close association with its host plant, Kearney buckwheat, on an estimated 1,000 acres within and adjacent to the 4,795 acre Sand Mountain Recreation Area managed by the Bureau of Land Management.

The Service's decision, commonly known as a 90-day finding, is based on scientific and commercial information about the species provided in the petition which was submitted by the Center for Biological Diversity, Xerces Society, Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, and Nevada Outdoor Recreation Society. The Service published this finding in today's Federal Register.

This 12-month status review will determine whether the Sand Mountain blue butterfly warrants listing as a threatened or endangered species. To ensure this status review is comprehensive, the Service is soliciting information from state and Federal natural resource agencies and all interested parties regarding the Sand Mountain blue butterfly and its habitat.

Based on the status review, the Service will make one of three possible determinations:

- 1) Listing is not warranted, in which case no further action will be taken.
- 2) Listing as threatened or endangered is warranted. In this case, the Service will publish a proposal to list, solicit independent scientific peer review of the proposal, seek input from the public, and consider the input before a final decision about listing the species is made. Generally, there is a one-year period between the time a species is proposed and the final decision.
- 3) Listing is warranted but precluded by other, higher priority activities. This means the species is added to the Federal list of candidate species, and the proposal to list is deferred while the Service works on listing proposals for other species that are at greater risk. A warranted but precluded finding requires subsequent annual reviews of the finding until such time as either a listing proposal is published, or a not warranted finding is made based on new information.

As a part of the review, the Service will also consider a public planning effort to develop a conservation plan for the Sand Mountain blue butterfly initiated by the Lahontan Valley Environmental Alliance (LVEA). Participants in this effort include representatives from the LVEA, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the Service, the City of Fallon, Churchill County, the Fallon Paiute Shoshone Tribe, the Friends of Sand Mountain (FOSM), the California Off-Road Vehicle Association (CORVA), the United States Naval Air Station Fallon, and private citizens.

The purpose of this conservation effort is to provide long term protection for the Sand Mountain blue butterfly and its habitat; particularly its host plant, Kearney buckwheat. One of the actions identified in the plan is the designation of a mandatory route system wherein recreation users will be required to stay on established trails within the recreation area to prevent damage to the butterfly's habitat. If successfully implemented, this plan could preclude the potential need to list the Sand Mountain blue butterfly as threatened or endangered under the ESA.

To submit information regarding Sand Mountain blue butterfly, write to: Field Supervisor, 1340 Financial Blvd., Suite 234, Reno, NV 89502. Send electronic mail to [sandmtblue@fws.gov](mailto:sandmtblue@fws.gov). Comments must be received by October 10, 2006.

For more information about the Sand Mountain blue butterfly and this finding, please visit the Service's web site at <http://www.fws.gov/nevada>.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.