



Webber's Ivesia Protection as Threatened, Designation of Critical Habitat & Economic Analysis

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What decision did the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) Make?

A. The Service determined threatened species status under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) for *Ivesia webberi* (Webber's ivesia), a plant species in California and Nevada along the transition zone between the eastern edge of the northern Sierra Nevada and the northwestern edge of the Great Basin. The Service is also designating 2,170 acres of critical habitat for the species.

About The Species



Webber's ivesia is a member of the rose family. It is a low-growing, perennial forb that is approximately ten inches in diameter with clusters of leaves that lie nearly flat on the ground. Webber's ivesia has greenish-gray leaves, dark red, wiry stems, and head-like clusters of small bright yellow flowers. Flowering typically begins in May and extends through June and the whole plant becomes reddish-tinged late in the season.

Webber's ivesia is restricted to sites with sparse vegetation and shallow, rocky, clay soils on mid elevation flats, benches or terraces between 4,475 and 6,237 feet elevation in Washoe and Douglas Counties in

Nevada, and in Lassen, Plumas and Sierra Counties, in California. All 17 known populations of Webber's ivesia are within the transition zone between the eastern edge of the northern Sierra Nevada and the northwestern edge of the Great Basin. One of these populations is presumed extirpated.

Q. What actions has the Service taken on Webber's ivesia?

A. On June 13, 2002, the Service determined that listing Webber's ivesia as a threatened or endangered species was warranted but precluded by higher priority listing actions and the species was added to the candidate species list with a listing priority number of five.

We committed to publishing the proposed listing and proposed critical habitat rule for the plants in 2013 through a multi-district litigation settlement agreement (MDL) with WildEarth Guardians and Center for Biological Diversity. The proposed listing as threatened and the proposed critical habitat rules were published in the *Federal Register* on August 2, 2013.

The draft economic analysis and a revision to the proposed critical habitat were published in the *Federal Register* on February 13, 2014.



Webber's Ivesia Protection as Threatened, Designation of Critical Habitat & Economic Analysis

Q. What is a threatened or endangered species under the ESA?

A. Species may be listed as either endangered or threatened. "Endangered" means a species is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range. "Threatened" means a species is likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future. All species of plants and animals, except pest insects, are eligible for listing as endangered or threatened.

Q. Why is the Service listing Webber's ivesia as a threatened species?

A. The Service determined that Webber's ivesia is not presently in danger of extinction throughout all of its range, but that it is likely to become endangered throughout all of its range in the foreseeable future.

- Populations occupy small areas. Thirteen of 16 extant populations occupy less than 10 acres, and 10 of 16 occupy less than five acres.
- 71 to 93 percent of all Webber's ivesia individuals occur in only two populations. One of these two populations is on private land which could become developed.
- Individual and synergistic effects from nonnative, invasive plant species, wildfire, OHVs and roads, development, and livestock grazing has already resulted in the loss and degradation of occupied habitat. These threats will likely increase in the future.
- Climate change will likely exacerbate already occurring habitat threats and may affect individual plants by causing physiological stress, altering phenology, and reducing recruitment events and/or seedling establishment.
- An existing USFS Conservation Strategy addresses conservation needed to eight of 16 populations, but key threats to the species are acting on a landscape level (wildfire and nonnative, invasive plant species) that is beyond the scope of threats addressed by this Conservation Strategy.

Q. What threat analysis did the Service complete in making this determination?

A. We have carefully assessed the best scientific and commercial information available regarding the past, present, and future threats to Webber's ivesia. We considered the five factors identified in section 4(a)(1) of the ESA in determining whether Webber's ivesia meets the ESA's definition of an endangered species (section 3(6)) or threatened species (section 3(20)).

Factor A – Habitat Loss and Fragmentation

We find that Webber's ivesia is in danger of extinction due to the present or threatened destruction, modification, or curtailment of its habitat or range.

- Present or threatened destruction, modification, or curtailment of its habitat or range include habitat loss and degradation due to nonnative invasive plants, modified fire regime (increased wildfire), OHV use and roads, development, livestock grazing, and climate change.
- We consider the additive and synergistic effects of nonnative, invasive plants and increased wildfire to be the greatest threats to Webber's ivesia.
- Nonnative, invasive plant species such as medusahead and cheatgrass can outcompete and displace Webber's ivesia where it is already established, and can prevent successful recruitment in Webber's



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ivesia populations by creating a dense thatch layer that hinders germination and establishment of Webber's ivesia seeds and seedlings.

- Nonnative, invasive plants also increase the frequency, spatial extent, and intensity of wildfires because of the fine fuels they produce.
- Options and resources available for controlling the spread of nonnative, invasive plant species such as medusahead and cheatgrass on a landscape scale are extremely limited.
- Increased temperatures and altered precipitation patterns due to climate change are also expected to lead to further increases in wildfire and invasive plants.
- OHV use and roads, development, and livestock grazing also negatively impact Webber's ivesia populations by creating vectors for the dispersal of nonnative, invasive plants, increasing the likelihood of trampling and erosion within remaining Webber's ivesia populations, and altering the native plant communities and pollinator species with which it is associated.

Factor B – Overutilization for Commercial, Recreational, Scientific, or Educational Purposes

We did not identify threats.

Factor C – Disease or Predation

We did not identify threats.

Factor D – Inadequacy of Existing Regulatory Mechanisms:

We consider existing regulatory mechanisms to be inadequate to protect the species from landscape-level threats posed by the additive and synergistic effects of invasive plant species, increased wildfire, and climate change.

Factor E – Other Natural or Manmade Factors:

We did not identify threats

Q. When will protection under the ESA go into effect for Webber's ivesia?

A. The rule placing Webber's ivesia as a threatened species on the list of endangered and threatened plants and designation of critical habitat will become effective July 3, 2014, 30 days from publication of the rule in the *Federal Register*.

Q. What is critical habitat and how does the Service determine what areas to propose?

A. Critical habitat is a term in the ESA of 1973, as amended. It identifies geographic areas that contain features essential for the conservation of a threatened or endangered species and may require special management considerations. 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 control of or public access to private lands.



Webber's Ivesia Protection as Threatened, Designation of Critical Habitat & Economic Analysis

Biologists consider physical or biological habitat features needed for life and successful reproduction of the species. These include, but are not limited to:

- Space for individual and population growth;
- Food, water, air, light, minerals, or other nutritional or physiological requirements
- Cover or shelter; and
- Habitats that are protected from disturbance or are representative of the historic geographical and ecological distributions of a species.

For more information about critical habitat, visit: <http://www.fws.gov/endangered/what-we-do/critical-habitats.html>.

Q. What is an economic analysis and what are the findings?

A. When specifying an area as critical habitat, the ESA requires the Service to consider economic and other relevant impacts of the designation.

The economic analysis estimates the costs associated with the designation of critical habitat are not likely to reach \$100 million per year and that the section 7-related costs of designating critical habitat for Webber's ivesia are likely to be limited (less than two consultations per year) to the additional administrative effort required to consider adverse modification in a small number of consultations. The costs of such administrative efforts are likely to range from approximately \$400 to \$9,000 per consultation.

Q. What are Primary Constituent Elements (PCEs)?

A. According to 50 CFR 424.12(b), we are required to identify the physical or biological features essential to the conservation of Webber's ivesia in areas occupied at the time of listing, focusing on the features' primary constituent elements. We consider primary constituent elements to be those specific elements of the physical or biological features that provide for a species' life-history processes and are essential to the conservation of the species.

Based on our current knowledge of the physical or biological features and habitat characteristics required to sustain the species' life-history processes, we determine that the primary constituent elements specific to Webber's ivesia are:

- (i) *Plant Community*
 - a. Open to sparsely vegetated areas composed of generally short-statured associated plant species.
 - b. Presence of appropriate associated species that can include (but are not limited to): *Antennaria dimorpha*, *Artemisia arbuscula*, *Balsamorhiza hookeri*, *Elymus elymoides*, *Erigeron bloomeri*, *Lewisia rediviva*, *Poa secunda*, and *Viola beckwithii*. Sites dominated by nonnative, invasive species such as *Bromus tectorum*, *Poa bulbosa*, and *Taeniatherum caput-medusae* should not be discounted, because *Ivesia webberi* may co-occur with these species.
 - c. An intact assemblage of appropriate associated species to attract the floral visitors that may be acting as pollinators of Webber's ivesia.



Webber's Ivesia Protection as Threatened, Designation of Critical Habitat & Economic Analysis

- (ii) *Topography*
 - a. Flats, benches, or terraces that are generally above or adjacent to large valleys. Occupied sites vary from slightly concave to slightly convex or gently sloped (0–15°) and occur on all aspects.
- (iii) *Elevation*
 - a. Elevations between 4,475 and 6,237 ft. (1,364 and 1,901 m).
- (iv) *Suitable Soils and Hydrology*
 - a. Vernal moist soils with an argillic horizon that shrink and swell upon drying and wetting; these soil conditions are characteristic of known Webber's ivesia populations and are likely important in the maintenance of the seedbank and population recruitment.
 - b. Suitable soils that can include (but are not limited to): Reno—a fine, smectitic, mesic Abruptic Xeric Argidurid; Xman—a clayey, smectitic, mesic, shallow Xeric Haplargids; Aldi—a clayey, smectitic, frigid Lithic Ultic Argixerolls; and Barshaad—a fine, smectitic, mesic Aridic Palexeroll

Q. What is being proposed as CH?

A. We are proposing to designate 2,170 acres as critical habitat for Webber's ivesia in Washoe and Douglas Counties in Nevada, and in Lassen, Plumas and Sierra Counties, in California which includes 16 units (2 comprised of 2 subunits each). The area within the 16 units is currently occupied by the species. Approximately 70 percent of the proposed critical habitat is on federally managed lands, 10 percent is state, and 20 percent is on private land.



Webber's Ivesia Protection as Threatened, Designation of Critical Habitat & Economic Analysis

The units with revised boundaries include: Unit 9 (Stateline Road 1), Unit 10 (Stateline Road 2), Unit 12 (Black Springs), Unit 13 (Raleigh Heights), and Unit 14 (Dutch Louie Flat).

CH Unit and Subunit #	Unit or Subunit Name	Federal	State or Local Government	Private	Total Area
		acres	acres	acres	acres
1	Sierra Valley	51	44	179	274
2	Constantia	155	—	—	155
3	East of HJWA, Evans Canyon	22	100	—	122
4	Hallelujah Junction WA	—	69	—	69
5	5a Dog Valley Meadow	386	—	—	386
	5b Upper Dog Valley	12	—	17	29
6	White Lake Overlook	98	—	11	109
7	7a Mules Ear Flat	31	—	34	65
	7b Three Pine Flat; Jeffrey Pine Saddle	3	—	65	68
8	Ivesia Flat	62	—	—	62
9	Stateline Road 1	186	—	7	193
10	Stateline Road 2	66	—	—	66
11	Hungry Valley	56	—	—	56
12	Black Springs	133	—	30	163
13	Raleigh Heights	229	—	24	253
14	Dutch Louie Flat	13	—	41	54
15	The Pines Powerline	—	—	32	32
16	Dante Mine Road	10	—	4	14
Total Acres		1,365	214	432	2,170

Q. Where can I find information about the final rule to list Webber's Ivesia?

A. The final rule is available on the internet at <http://www.regulations.gov> (Docket Number FWS-R8-ES-2013-0079) and <http://www.fws.gov>. Comments and materials we received, as well as supporting documentation we used in preparing this rule, are available for public inspection at <http://www.regulations.gov>. All of the comments, materials, and documentation that we considered in this rulemaking are available by appointment, during normal business hours at: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Nevada Fish and Wildlife Office, 1340 Financial Boulevard, Suite 234, Reno, NV 89502; by telephone 775-861-6300, or by facsimile 775-861-6301.