

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

news release

For Release September 29, 1978

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FIVE WESTERN PLANTS LISTED AS ENDANGERED SPECIES

Five western plants have been listed as endangered species by the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Keith M. Schreiner, Associate Director, announced today.

The rulemaking, published in the September 28, 1978, Federal Register, lists as endangered four plants from California and northern Baja California and one plant from Utah. All are in danger of extinction because of conflicts with modern technology.

The California plants are:

McDonald's rock cress (Arabis macdonaldiana), a member of the mustard family. This plant's only known habitat is on Red Mountain, Mendocino County, which may be heavily impacted by mining.

San Diego pogogyne (Pogogyne abramsii), a member of the mint family. This species lives near seasonally present pools on mesas of western San Diego County, and is vulnerable in view of recent road construction, use of off-road vehicles, and housing developments.

Crampton's orcutt grass (Orcuttia mucronata), a member of the grass family. This species has been found only in one large seasonal lake bed in Salano County. Housing developments have destroyed many of the other seasonal pools in the area.

Salt marsh bird's-beak (Cordylanthus maritimus spp. maritimus), a member of the snapdragon family. This species was once widespread in coastal salt marshes from Santa Barbara County to northern Baja California.

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Filling of coastal marshes has drastically reduced the species from its known habitat. It is now found only in the Tijuana River estuary in San Diego County, Point Mugu in Ventura County, and northern Baja California, Mexico.

The Utah plant is:

An unnamed phacelia (Phacelia argillacea), a member of the waterleaf family. This species lives only in Utah County, and as of 1977 only nine plants were counted. Construction of a railroad through the only known population seriously affected the species. Expansion of an access road that runs beside the railroad tracks could wipe out the species.

A 1975 report by the Smithsonian Institution found over 31,000 species of U.S. plants believed to be endangered, threatened, or extinct. Scientists are concerned about the decline of native plant species because of the effects their loss may have on insects, birds, and other organisms that depend on them. Plants also contain many chemicals that may be valuable to people; some wild plants may be useful in producing new strains of plants for agriculture.

The Fish and Wildlife Service published regulations protecting endangered plants in the Federal Register on June 24, 1977. These regulations establish prohibitions against the import, export, or interstate commerce of plants listed as endangered or threatened species. Exceptions to the prohibitions can be provided through a permit system operated by the Fish and Wildlife Service.

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