

# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

news release

For Release April 25, 1979

Inez Connor 202/343-5634

## FLORIDA RHODODENDRON LISTED AS ENDANGERED

A rare Florida rhododendron, already on the State's list of endangered plants, has now been added to the U.S. List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants. The action was published in the April 24, 1979, Federal Register by the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Chapman rhododendron, an evergreen shrub that displays a rosy cluster of 2-inch blooms in March and April, can now be found in its natural habitat in only three places in Florida. It is doing well at one location in Clay County where National Guard officials are participating in an active conservation program. However, its fate is less certain at the other two privately owned locations in Gulf and Gadsden-Liberty Counties. In addition to habitat destruction, the rhododendron is also threatened by over-collection for the horticultural trade.

Critical habitat was not designated for the plant because publishing detailed information on its location would make it more vulnerable to collecting. The Endangered Species Act does not prohibit the taking of endangered plants. Listing of the Chapman rhododendron will reinforce the State's conservation efforts.

x x x