

News Release



Department of the Interior
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
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Protection Proposed for Rare Bumble Bee Found Only in California, Oregon

PORTLAND, Oregon – Franklin’s bumble bee has the smallest geographic range of any bumble bee species in North America. The hills of southwest Oregon and northern California are where this elusive bee calls home. Although it has always been hard to spot, the bee has not been observed in its native habitat since 2006.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today announced a proposal to list Franklin’s bumble bee as endangered under the Endangered Species Act. The proposal comes with a 60-day public comment period.

Historically, Franklin’s bumble bees have been found at elevations between 540 feet to more than 7,800 feet, located in a roughly 13,000-square-mile area in southwest Oregon and northern California. Their ability to survive in cold climates makes them the primary pollinators of alpine flowering plants. The bee needs abundant flowers throughout their May-September flight season and cavities—or holes—for breeding and sheltering. Because they are habitat generalists and there appears to be plenty of intact habitat available to them, the Service determined that designating critical habitat for the Franklin’s bumble bee is not prudent.

Franklin’s bumble bees are likely impacted by a combination of factors including disease, small population size, and neonicotinoid pesticides. The range wide decline of this species since the late 1990s and persistent threats mean this bee is at high risk of becoming extinct.

“A proposed listing of Franklin’s bumble bee is not expected to impact many private landowners because its range is extremely limited, and most recent observations have occurred on federal land at higher elevations,” said Robyn Thorson, the Service’s Pacific Regional Director. “We will continue to work closely with the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management and researchers to locate bees and manage their habitat.”

This 60-day comment period allows the public to review and comment on the proposal to list Franklin's bumble bee and to provide additional information. We are seeking information about the distribution, status, population trends of this species or any other information that helps ensure we make an informed decision on the status of this species. All relevant information received by October 15, 2019, will be considered.

Xerces Society and an individual scientist petitioned the Service in 2010 to list the Franklin's bumble bee as endangered under the ESA, based on small number of extant populations, natural instability of small populations and other factors.

For information on how to provide public comments, request a public hearing, or find more information on the Franklin's bumble bee, please visit <http://www.fws.gov/oregonfwo/>.

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