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Mountain Prairie Region
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News Release



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Milkvetch Warrants Endangered Species Act Protection But Listing Precluded By Other Priorities

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced today that the Goose Creek milkvetch, a plant found only in a 10-square-mile area of Idaho, Nevada and Utah, warrants protection under the Endangered Species Act (Act). However, listing the Goose Creek milkvetch at this time is precluded by pending actions for other species with higher listing priorities.

The low-growing perennial plant is found only in the Goose Creek drainage of Cassia County, Idaho; Elko County, Nevada; and Box Elder County, Utah.

In February 2004, Red Willow Research and twenty-five other parties petitioned the Service to list the plant throughout its range under the emergency provisions of the Act. In response to the petition, the Service, in coordination with the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service (Idaho) and state natural resource programs in Utah, Nevada and Idaho, initiated surveys and census efforts to increase understanding of the distribution, abundance and factors affecting Goose Creek milkvetch.

On August 16, 2007, the Service published a 90-day finding that the petition presented substantial scientific or commercial information indicating that listing may be warranted, which then initiated a 12-month status review of the species.

A late-summer wildfire in 2007 burned 25 percent of the plant's occupied habitat in Nevada and Utah, and more than 50 percent of the known individuals of the species.

In a post-fire effort to stabilize soils, eleven Goose Creek milkvetch sites administered by the Bureau of Land Management in Utah, comprising about 6 percent of the species' total range, were partially disked and seeded with a highly competitive native and nonnative seed mix. Leafy spurge, a nonnative invasive species, also threatens the plant by competing for resources at some sites.

The long-term effects of wildlife and associated fire restoration efforts will be assessed through additional plant surveys and monitoring in the future.

After a thorough review of the best available information and scientific literature, consideration of existing threats, and review of the 2008 plant surveys in both burned and unburned areas, the Service finds that Goose Creek milkvetch warrants protection under the Act, but is precluded by other listing priorities.

With this finding, Goose Creek milkvetch will be added to the list of candidate species eligible for protection under the Act. While the species receives no statutory protection under the Act, inclusion on the candidate list promotes conservation efforts for these species. The Service's ultimate goal, which will be evaluated on an annual basis, is to work with others to intervene and successfully address conservation needs from the species so that listing is unnecessary.

For further information, please contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Utah Ecological Services Field 2369 West Orton Circle, Suite 50, West Valley City, Utah 84119, 801 975 3330.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov.