

News Release

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Releases Final Recovery Plan Addendum for Endangered Moloka'i Plant

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) announced an addendum to the plan to recover the endangered *Phyllostegia hispida* – a Hawaiian mint endemic to the island of Moloka'i. The addendum, which was published today in the Federal Register, is part of the final Recovery Plan for *Phyllostegia hispida*: Addendum to the Moloka'i Plant Cluster Recovery Plan.

Phyllostegia hispida was added to the existing Moloka'i Plant Cluster Recovery Plan because it occurs in habitats similar to those for other plants covered in the original island plan, faces similar threats, and many of the recommended recovery actions are similar or identical to those for other species in the Moloka'i Plant Cluster Recovery Plan.

“This unique species was thought to have become extinct in the 1990s, but was rediscovered in 2005,” said Loyal Mehrhoff, Field Supervisor for the Fish and Wildlife Service’s Pacific Islands Fish and Wildlife Office. “Species such as *Phyllostegia hispida* are integral to the overall health of native ecosystems in Hawaii. A number of conservation organizations are undertaking important efforts to manage habitat for this species, propagate additional plants, and to re-establish populations into the wild.”

Phyllostegia hispida, known only by its scientific name, was designated an endangered species on March 17, 2009. The species is found only in the wet, ‘ōhi‘a dominated forests of eastern Moloka'i between 3,650 and 4,200 feet elevation. *Phyllostegia hispida* is a nonaromatic member of the mint family (Lamiaceae). It is a loosely spreading, many-branched vine that often forms large tangled masses.

The final recovery plan includes recovery objectives and criteria, specific recovery actions, and the estimated time and costs needed to achieve downlisting and delisting of the species. The ultimate goal of recovery planning is to recover species to the point where the species no longer requires protection of the Endangered Species Act.

To prevent the extinction of *Phyllostegia hispida* and ultimately recover the species within its historical range, the Service recommends: protecting, managing, and increasing all of the known wild populations; continuing survey efforts to identify any additional populations; increasing the area occupied by existing populations; establishing new populations; controlling threats such as habitat degradation and consumption of plants by feral pigs and competition with invasive introduced plants; and increasing knowledge of the species through research and monitoring to ensure the effective management and reintroduction of the species.

Recovery criteria are measurable, achievable goals that the Service believes will result from implementation of the recovery actions in this plan. To be considered for downlisting (change from endangered to threatened status) the recovery criteria for *Phyllostegia hispida* requires a total of at least five viable populations documented in suitable habitat; each population must have implemented management and monitoring plans; and all of the populations must be fenced and protected from ungulates with agreements from conservation partners to maintain those protections in perpetuity. Each of these populations must be naturally reproducing, stable or increasing in number, and threats must be managed so that a minimum of 300 mature individuals are maintained per population.

The recovery criteria for *Phyllostegia hispida* to be considered for delisting (removal from the list of federally listed plants) are the same for downlisting, except delisting requires a total of at least eight viable populations documented in suitable habitat.

Phyllostegia hispida has rarely been seen in the wild. From 1910 to 1979, a total of 8 populations were recorded, but in subsequent years died for various reasons. Since 1996, surveys failed to locate additional individuals and the species was thought to be extirpated until 2005 when two seedlings were discovered at The Nature Conservancy's Kamakou Preserve. Currently there are fewer than 10 wild mature individuals, three wild seedlings, and approximately seven to 10 reintroduced individuals. No known population is entirely protected from the numerous factors threatening the species' existence.

The most significant threat is the species' low numbers, which makes it particularly susceptible to extinction from random events such as hurricanes and disease outbreaks. Other major threats are predation and habitat degradation by feral pigs and competition with invasive, non-native plants.

Conservation measures have been taken and continue today to protect the species. A variety of organizations such as the University of Hawai'i's Lyon Arboretum on O'ahu, the National Tropical Botanical Garden on Kaua'i, Olinda Rare Plant Facility on Maui, and Kalaupapa National Historical Park on Moloka'i are propagating plants, some of which have already been used for outplanting into suitable habitat. Land managers from Hawai'i's Department of Land and Natural Resources have fenced some plants to protect them from feral ungulates, and The Nature Conservancy continues to control feral pigs and non-native plants within the Kamakou Preserve.

Copies of the final recovery plan are available through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's website at <http://www.fws.gov/pacificislands/> or by calling the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Honolulu office at (808) 792-9400.

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