



**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**

## News Release

*Pacific Islands External Affairs Office*

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### **Draft Revised Recovery Plan for the Mariana Fruit Bat Released for Public Review**

A draft revised recovery plan that outlines steps needed to recover the threatened Mariana fruit bat, known as fanihi in the Chamorro language, was released today by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for public review and comment. The fanihi is a subspecies of fruit bat found only in the Mariana archipelago, including the US territories of Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands.

“Throughout its history, the fanihi has been an essential part of the culture of the Mariana Islands,” said Loyal Mehrhoff, field supervisor for the Fish and Wildlife Office in the Pacific Islands. “It is our hope that the people of the Mariana Islands will support this plan and come together to ensure that the fanihi will be a sustainable part of their culture for many years to come.”

The fanihi was originally listed as endangered on Guam in 1984, and a recovery plan for the species was approved in 1990. In January 2005, the Service published a final rule reclassifying the species to threatened status because the Guam population was considered a subset of a single population distributed throughout the Mariana archipelago. The new revised plan will guide future recovery actions for the subspecies.

“Growing up, I recall the stories my parents and grandparents told me about the fanihi and the special place it holds in the Chamorro culture,” said Tony Babauta, the Department of the Interior’s Assistant Secretary of Insular Areas. “The fanihi has endured many challenges to its continued existence in the Marianas and this new recovery plan provides hope that its cultural significance is not only remembered in cultural lore alone but that the fanihi continues to live and thrive in the jungles of the Marianas for future generations to enjoy and appreciate.”

The plan includes recovery actions that will address the immediate management of the species to reduce risks and stabilize the existing population; actions to reduce or eliminate hunting to allow increases in fanihi numbers throughout the archipelago; protection of the best existing habitat and enhancement of additional suitable habitat; effective control and interdiction of the brown treesnake; research to address gaps in our knowledge of the fanihi life history and ecology and improve our ability to model the population, assess its sensitivity to specific threats and management actions, and forecast how best to ensure its continued existence.

Examples of proposed recovery actions include involving local hunters and residents in research and recovery efforts, preventing the spread of the brown treesnake from Guam to Saipan, providing law enforcement support to local conservation officers, establishing roost site sanctuaries on other islands, improving inspection at ports of entry to prevent illegal trafficking in fanihi, controlling or eradicating ungulates in key locations, and conducting education in elementary and secondary schools.

Scientific data indicate that the majority of the fanihi now inhabit the relatively isolated northern islands of the CNMI (islands north of Saipan). Data collected indicate a 40-percent decline in fruit bat

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numbers between 1983 and 2000 among the six northern islands that were surveyed. The largest declines were recorded on two of the three largest northern islands – Anatahan and Pagan – which together harbored the majority of the archipelago’s fanihi in the 1980s.

On Guam, where fewer than 100 individuals remain, the fanihi is known to roost primarily on federal lands (Andersen Air Force Base and the Ritidian Unit of the Guam National Wildlife Refuge) and forage widely throughout the island.

Habitat loss and degradation along with illegal hunting are the major threats to the fanihi. The southern islands of the archipelago have lost significant habitat due to land conversion for agriculture, military, commercial, and residential development. Predation by introduced predators such as brown treesnakes, rats, and feral cats pose additional threats. Fanihi have evolved over thousands of years to adapt to impacts from natural disturbances such as typhoons and volcanic eruptions; however, human-caused threats increase the negative impacts of these natural disturbances on the fanihi population.

The fanihi is a medium-sized fruit bat in the family Pteropodidae; members of this family are often referred to as flying foxes because of the canine appearance of the face. The bats range in weight from 0.66 pounds to 1.15 pounds (males are slightly larger than females) and have an impressive wingspan ranging from 2.75 to 3.5 feet. All animals have grizzled black to brown fur and a golden brown mantle. The head color varies from brown to dark brown.

Fanihi live in colonies ranging from a few to more than 800 individuals and group themselves into harems (1 male with 2-15 females) or bachelor groups consisting primarily of males. The bats sleep and socialize during much of the day, and depart colonies near or after sunset to forage.

Native forests are the primary habitat required by the fruit bat, although some introduced plant species can provide roost sites and sources of food. Important components of tropical forest systems, fruit bats disperse seeds, which helps maintain forest diversity and contributes to plant regeneration. The fruit bat feeds on a wide variety of plant material including fruits, nectar, pollen and leaves.

The Service plans to hold informational meetings during the comment period, as needed, to discuss the draft plan and conservation needs of the fanihi. These meetings will be informal and open to the public and will be designed to share information about the fanihi, and facilitate submission of public comments on the draft plan. Times and locations of the meetings will be announced and publicized at a later date.

The availability of the draft revised recovery plan for a 90-day public comment period was announced in the Federal Register on March 30, 2010. Copies of the draft recovery plan are available through the Fish and Wildlife Service’s website at <http://www.fws.gov/pacificislands> or by calling the Fish and Wildlife Service’s Honolulu office at 808 792 9400. Written comments may be submitted until June 28, 2010 to Loyal Mehrhoff, Field Supervisor, Pacific Islands Fish and Wildlife Office, 300 Ala Moana Boulevard, Room 3-122, Box 50088, Honolulu, Hawaii 96850.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, 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](http://www.fws.gov).