

**USFWS Virtual Public Meeting for Sacramento Mountains Checkerspot
Butterfly**

Virtual Public Meeting Transcript

December 13, 2023, 5:00-8:00 PM Mountain Time

00:00:07.980 --> 00:00:18.810

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Hello, everyone. I'd like to welcome you all to the US Fish and Wildlife Service's virtual public meeting for the proposed critical habitat designation

00:00:18.830 --> 00:00:31.879

Megan Stone - EMPSi: for the Sacramento Mountains checkerspot butterfly. We're going to give folks a few minutes here to join the meeting and then we'll begin the PowerPoint presentation shortly, so please stay tuned.

00:00:31.970 --> 00:00:42.909

Megan Stone - EMPSi: I do want to note that closed captioning is available by clicking the Live Transcript button icon on your Zoom toolbar and then selecting 'Show Subtitles.'

00:01:06.800 --> 00:01:17.360

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Again, welcome everyone to tonight's meeting. We're going to give folks a few more moments to join the meeting, so please stay tuned and we'll start the presentation shortly.

00:01:17.510 --> 00:01:28.880

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Again, I do want to note that closed captioning is available by clicking the Live Transcript icon on your Zoom toolbar and then selecting 'Show Subtitles.'

00:01:29.220 --> 00:01:34.130

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Thank you, everyone, for your patience as we give folks a few more minutes to join.

00:02:10.270 --> 00:02:11.950

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Next slide, please.

00:02:14.670 --> 00:02:19.199

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Hello, everyone. We're going to go ahead and get started with our meeting tonight.

00:02:19.390 --> 00:02:24.879

Megan Stone - EMPSi: I would like to thank you all for joining us. We appreciate your time and participation.

00:02:24.940 --> 00:02:30.389

Megan Stone - EMPSi: My name is Megan Stone, with Environmental Management and Planning Solutions, inc.,

00:02:30.540 --> 00:02:45.150

Megan Stone - EMPSi: a contractor for the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and I'm going to be one of your meeting facilitators tonight. Additionally, I have several members of the Service with me on the meeting tonight who will be introduced in a moment.

00:02:45.740 --> 00:02:55.360

Megan Stone - EMPSi: On the screen is our anticipated agenda. I'll first go over a brief orientation to Zoom, and some ground rules for this evening's meeting.

00:02:55.650 --> 00:03:04.539

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Shawn Sartorius, Project Leader with the New Mexico Ecological Services Field Office will provide opening remarks.

00:03:04.740 --> 00:03:19.240

Megan Stone - EMPSi: The Service will provide a PowerPoint presentation on the proposed critical habitat, which will last approximately 30 minutes. The Service will then answer any questions you may have about the proposed critical habitat

00:03:19.400 --> 00:03:23.160

Megan Stone - EMPSi: for around 30 minutes in a question-and-answer session.

00:03:23.280 --> 00:03:35.510

Megan Stone - EMPSi: We'll then take a brief 30-minute break before returning at 6:30 PM Mountain Time to begin our public hearing. The public hearing will last until 8:00 PM Mountain Time.

00:03:36.180 --> 00:03:37.760

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Next slide, please.

00:03:40.650 --> 00:03:54.159

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Before we get started with the presentation, I'll go over some ground rules for the meeting. First, this meeting is being recorded as part of the project record and a recording will be posted to the Service's website.

00:03:54.540 --> 00:04:00.159

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Second, your microphones and videos will be turned off for the duration of the meeting tonight.

00:04:00.390 --> 00:04:10.210

Megan Stone - EMPSi: You'll only be unmuted if and when I unmute you during the question-and-answer session if you're a phone caller, or the verbal public hearing.

00:04:10.620 --> 00:04:16.580

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Third, questions will be addressed during the Q&A Session after the PowerPoint presentation.

00:04:16.790 --> 00:04:24.749

Megan Stone - EMPSi: We will do our best to address questions in the order they come in to allow everyone an opportunity to voice their question.

00:04:24.970 --> 00:04:34.879

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Please note, if you already submitted a question through the registration page, there's no need to submit that again; we'll start with those questions first.

00:04:35.470 --> 00:04:49.940

Megan Stone - EMPSi: After the Q&A session, we'll have a 30-minute break and then we'll reconvene and move on to the verbal public hearing, during which we'll accept verbal public comments from participants who have joined tonight's meeting.

00:04:50.550 --> 00:05:02.580

Megan Stone - EMPSi: If you registered before the start time of tonight's meeting and indicated that you wanted to offer a verbal public comment tonight, you are on our list of pre-registered commenters

00:05:02.610 --> 00:05:06.940

Megan Stone - EMPSi: and we'll call on you in the order of registration.

00:05:07.250 --> 00:05:14.259

Megan Stone - EMPSi: If you registered after the meeting started, we'll do our best to reserve some time for you to have an opportunity

00:05:14.320 --> 00:05:28.760

Megan Stone - EMPSi: to offer your verbal public comment. If you do not get the opportunity to offer your verbal public comment tonight, we'll provide more information later on about where and how written comments can be submitted.

00:05:29.070 --> 00:05:39.839

Megan Stone - EMPSi: So with that, I'll now turn it over to Project Leader Shawn Sartorius with the New Mexico Ecological Services Field Office for some opening remarks.

00:05:40.650 --> 00:05:41.750

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Next slide.

00:05:44.930 --> 00:05:48.739

Shawn Sartorius - USFWS: Thank you, Megan. Hello, everyone,

00:05:49.590 --> 00:05:51.769

Shawn Sartorius - USFWS: and thank you for joining us this evening.

00:05:51.960 --> 00:06:00.299

Shawn Sartorius - USFWS: My name is Shawn Sartorius, and I'm the Field Supervisor for the US Fish and Wildlife Service, New Mexico Ecological Services Field Office.

00:06:00.470 --> 00:06:05.690

Shawn Sartorius - USFWS: With me tonight from the Service is Janelle Alleman,

00:06:05.900 --> 00:06:10.170

Shawn Sartorius - USFWS: biologist and Species Lead for the Sacramento Mountains checkerspot butterfly;

00:06:10.400 --> 00:06:15.880

Shawn Sartorius - USFWS: Jackie Albert, Species Assessment Team Project Manager for the Southwest Region;

00:06:16.010 --> 00:06:17.729

Shawn Sartorius - USFWS: and Susan Oetker,

00:06:17.830 --> 00:06:20.919

Shawn Sartorius - USFWS: Listing Coordinator for the Southwest Region.

00:06:20.990 --> 00:06:24.939

Shawn Sartorius - USFWS: We're here to give you some information about the butterfly,

00:06:25.180 --> 00:06:30.530

Shawn Sartorius - USFWS: our proposal to designate critical habitat and help with answering questions.

00:06:32.140 --> 00:06:40.519

Shawn Sartorius - USFWS: We are here to discuss the Service's proposal to designate critical habitat for the endangered Sacramento Mountains checkerspot butterfly.

00:06:41.400 --> 00:06:42.720

Shawn Sartorius - USFWS: Our decision

00:06:42.870 --> 00:06:51.950

Shawn Sartorius - USFWS: to propose critical habitat came after substantial collaboration with our partners, including the US Forest Service and many species experts.

00:06:52.680 --> 00:07:02.089

Shawn Sartorius - USFWS: This proposal utilizes the best available science, which is summarized in the Species Condition Assessment Report published for the butterfly,

00:07:02.990 --> 00:07:11.570

Shawn Sartorius - USFWS: to identify and propose for designation, habitats that are important to the species now, and for future recovery efforts.

00:07:12.640 --> 00:07:22.739

Shawn Sartorius - USFWS: When critical habitat is designated for the species, it will be the beginning of a long journey that will require our collective talents and resources to achieve recovery for the species.

00:07:23.360 --> 00:07:33.569

Shawn Sartorius - USFWS: Ultimately, the Service can't be successful in our mission without the backing and support of the local communities in the Sacramento Mountains, our partners, and the support of the American people.

00:07:34.050 --> 00:07:44.340

Shawn Sartorius - USFWS: Thank you, again, for your participation tonight. We look forward to your support in recovering this unique butterfly. With that, I'll turn this hearing over to Janelle Alleman

00:07:44.460 --> 00:07:51.139

Shawn Sartorius - USFWS: who will provide a short presentation on the species and our proposed critical habitat units. Thank you.

00:07:54.890 --> 00:08:03.710

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: Thank you, Shawn. Hello, everyone. My name is Janelle Alleman, and I'm the Species Lead for the endangered Sacramento Mountains checkerspot butterfly.

00:08:03.980 --> 00:08:17.150

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: This butterfly was listed as endangered in January of this year, and a Species Condition Assessment Report was completed. At the time of listing, the species critical habitat was deferred from being designated.

00:08:17.500 --> 00:08:26.439

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: In August of this year, we finished assessing habitats important to the species, and published a proposal to designate critical habitat in the Federal Register.

00:08:26.900 --> 00:08:27.959

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: Next slide.

00:08:31.130 --> 00:08:44.989

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: On August 10th, 2023, the Service proposed to designate approximately 1,600 acres on the Sacramento Mountains in Otero County, New Mexico, as critical habitat for the endangered Sacramento Mountains checkerspot butterfly.

00:08:45.530 --> 00:08:59.979

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: The proposed critical habitat designation identified both occupied and unoccupied areas that are important to the conservation of this species, and a comment period for this proposed rule was opened from August 10th through October 10th of this year.

00:09:00.350 --> 00:09:08.919

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: During the comment period, the Service received several comments as well as request to host a public hearing on our proposed rule. Next slide.

00:09:13.640 --> 00:09:17.170

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: A little bit of background on the Sacramento Mountains checkerspot butterfly

00:09:17.730 --> 00:09:33.260

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: is that it's currently recognized as a subspecies of the variable checkerspot. The butterfly is endemic to the Sacramento Mountains in south-central New Mexico, and restricted to high elevation meadow habitat that occurs within the mixed conifer forest on the Sacramentos.

00:09:33.430 --> 00:09:47.869

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: Adult butterflies are about 2 inches wide and are distinguished from other checkerspot species by their darker coloration, dark brown or black bands separating their checked pattern of orange and creams and have orange clubs on their antennas.

00:09:48.260 --> 00:09:55.009

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: Adults require a diversity of nectar species to subsist and strongly prefer orange sneezeweed as their

00:09:55.260 --> 00:09:57.070

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: primary food source.

00:09:57.160 --> 00:09:59.800

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: After mating occurs, female adults

00:09:59.900 --> 00:10:01.439

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: lay their eggs

00:10:01.660 --> 00:10:16.770

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: on New Mexico penstemon, also known as New Mexico beardtongue, which is the primary food source and host plant for larvae. The larvae of the species are identified by their coloration, which is predominantly gray with orange and black hairs creating a checked pattern.

00:10:17.050 --> 00:10:23.880

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: When larvae hatch they create a communal silken shelter called a tent over their host plant New Mexico penstemon

00:10:23.960 --> 00:10:25.699

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: and feed until winter.

00:10:25.900 --> 00:10:34.929

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: At this early post-hatching stage, the caterpillars are relatively immobile, only traveling short distances in search of new food sources.

00:10:35.330 --> 00:10:52.310

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: As winter approaches, caterpillars enter a period of arrested metabolism called diapause, which is similar to hibernation. Diapause lasts until spring conditions return and weather and food resources are sufficient to promote growth and ultimately pupation into adults.

00:10:52.810 --> 00:10:53.909

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: Next slide.

00:10:57.740 --> 00:11:12.880

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: The Sacramento Mountains checkerspot butterfly has specific habitat requirements to complete its life cycle. The meadows preferred by the species are usually cool and wet, supporting diverse and robust plant life, including the butterfly's preferred host plant, New Mexico penstemon,

00:11:13.120 --> 00:11:22.270

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: and have low canopy cover. Adults need an abundance of nectar sources, but primarily use orange sneezeweed as their preferred food source.

00:11:22.420 --> 00:11:28.110

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: Both adults and larvae require New Mexico penstemon for egg laying and as a food source for the larvae.

00:11:28.360 --> 00:11:29.360

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: Next slide.

00:11:33.290 --> 00:11:54.129

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: Historically, the Sacramento Mountains checkerspot butterfly occupied meadows dispersed across about 82 square kilometers around the Village of Cloudcroft on the Lincoln National Forest. However, the suitable habitat within this area is only about 5 square kilometers, meaning that the butterfly occupies an extremely narrow area of habitat.

00:11:54.340 --> 00:12:02.690

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: Therefore, it's very important that connected suitable habitat is maintained or expanded to support this species and future recovery efforts.

00:12:03.430 --> 00:12:04.500

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: Next slide.

00:12:08.830 --> 00:12:18.309

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: Some of the primary threats to this species include incompatible grazing, recreation, climate change, invasive and non-native plants,

00:12:18.320 --> 00:12:21.040

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: and an altered wildfire regime.

00:12:21.200 --> 00:12:29.200

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: These threats change the structure and availability of suitable habitat for the butterfly, inhibiting it from successfully completing its life cycle.

00:12:29.230 --> 00:12:39.329

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: An assessment of these threats to the species viability can be found in the Species Condition Assessment Report that was published in 2022 and is available on our website.

00:12:39.900 --> 00:12:40.930

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: Next slide.

00:12:45.790 --> 00:12:48.120

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: Based on the species biology,

00:12:48.220 --> 00:13:00.389

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: the current limited distribution of the species, and our knowledge of their habitat needs, we propose to designate currently occupied as well as unoccupied suitable habitat as critical habitat for the butterfly.

00:13:00.400 --> 00:13:15.230

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: These areas are deemed essential to the species conservation and future recovery efforts by providing suitable habitat in areas currently occupied as well as areas that contain suitable habitat for the species to disperse into and re-occupy in the future.

00:13:15.740 --> 00:13:28.509

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: To determine critical habitat, we considered the physical and biological habitat features necessary to support the life history, and successful reproduction needs of the Sacramento Mountains checkerspot butterfly.

00:13:28.860 --> 00:13:40.710

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: We utilized the Condition Status Assessment Report which included the most current knowledge we have on the species and their habitat to help us identify physical and biological features of critical habitat.

00:13:41.000 --> 00:14:00.020

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: A critical habitat designation does not necessarily restrict any activity, such as the development of private lands, unless there is a federal nexus to the project, such as if federal funding or permitting is needed to complete the project. Areas designated as critical habitat require federal agencies who fund, issue permits,

00:14:00.210 --> 00:14:13.969

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: or otherwise authorize projects to consult with the Service. The goal of any such consultation is not to prevent an activity from occurring, but to ensure that listed species and their critical habitats are protected as much as possible.

00:14:14.160 --> 00:14:15.150

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: Next slide.

00:14:19.580 --> 00:14:25.229

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: The physical and biological features identified for the Sacramento Mountains checkerspot butterfly

00:14:25.500 --> 00:14:40.529

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: and used to assess habitat to identify potential critical habitat included: high elevation mountains that provide for an open grassland habitat within the mixed conifer forest that occur on the Sacramento Mountains in Otero County, New Mexico;

00:14:42.440 --> 00:14:46.560

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: the presence of larval host plant and primary food sources,

00:14:46.890 --> 00:14:49.640

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: New Mexico penstemon and orange sneezeweed;

00:14:49.970 --> 00:14:55.089

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: access to and presence of nectar sources for adults, including orange sneezeweed;

00:14:55.290 --> 00:15:05.750

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: habitat connectivity between populations of less than 890 meters; low canopy cover, typically less than 5%, within the meadows;

00:15:06.230 --> 00:15:15.399

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: and areas adjacent to or linking areas that have these habitat features and are sufficient to support the dispersal of the butterfly between areas of suitable habitat.

00:15:16.040 --> 00:15:17.099

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: Next slide.

00:15:22.810 --> 00:15:33.640

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: After using the physical and biological features that were important to the butterfly to identify meadows that contain suitable butterfly habitat, we then assessed each meadow to determine occupancy.

00:15:33.850 --> 00:15:38.770

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: A meadow unit was considered occupied if adults had been observed in the past 3 years.

00:15:38.900 --> 00:15:47.480

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: This map shows the meadow units, in red, that we consider to be currently occupied by the species, which includes Bailey Canyon up to La Luz Canyon

00:15:47.590 --> 00:15:49.660

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: and the Pines Campground area.

00:15:49.900 --> 00:15:57.080

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: The remaining units, in black, were historically occupied by the species but have not been seen there in more than 3 years.

00:15:57.280 --> 00:16:03.219

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: As you can see, the amount of occupied habitat has substantially decreased over the years.

00:16:03.820 --> 00:16:04.880

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: Next slide.

00:16:10.530 --> 00:16:27.519

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: Our proposal to designate critical habitat for the Sacramento Mountains checkerspot butterfly includes all occupied meadows as well as unoccupied meadows that contain suitable habitat for the species and have at least one of the biological and physical features identified as important to the butterfly.

00:16:27.590 --> 00:16:36.199

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: There are 9 units proposed that cover approximately 1,600 acres of Federal lands, Mescalero Apache Tribal lands, and private property.

00:16:36.370 --> 00:16:47.920

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: As part of our proposals to designate critical habitat, we are considering excluding all, Mescalero Apache Tribal lands. No other areas are proposed for exclusion at this time. Next slide.

00:17:02.620 --> 00:17:05.959

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: And with that, I will turn it back over to Megan.

00:17:09.390 --> 00:17:12.500

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Thank you, Janelle, and thank you, Shawn.

00:17:12.569 --> 00:17:18.010

Megan Stone - EMPSi: We'll go ahead and get started with our question-and-answer session this evening,

00:17:18.390 --> 00:17:24.240

Megan Stone - EMPSi: and I'll go through some instructions for how we'll approach the Q&A.

00:17:24.810 --> 00:17:33.819

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Again, my name is Megan Stone, and I'll be the moderator. This Q&A portion will last approximately 30 minutes

00:17:34.010 --> 00:17:43.990

Megan Stone - EMPSi: and the intent of this question-and-answer session is to answer any substantive questions you have for the Service on the critical habitat designation.

00:17:44.170 --> 00:17:50.629

Megan Stone - EMPSi: If you submitted your question before the start of the meeting through the registration page,

00:17:50.730 --> 00:17:57.789

Megan Stone - EMPSi: please note that you will not need to resubmit that question because we will be starting with those questions first.

00:17:58.330 --> 00:18:17.149

Megan Stone - EMPSi: I'll go over how to submit a question using the chat function if you are using the Zoom web platform or Zoom app. After we've gone through those instructions, we'll let you guys know how you can ask a question if you are joining us by phone.

00:18:17.640 --> 00:18:29.239

Megan Stone - EMPSi: At this time, if you have a question and you are using the Zoom web platform or Zoom app, please go ahead and click on the Chat icon at the bottom of your Zoom screen.

00:18:29.500 --> 00:18:35.099

Megan Stone - EMPSi: If you hover your mouse over the bottom of your Zoom screen, the Chat icon should appear.

00:18:35.330 --> 00:18:51.279

Megan Stone - EMPSi: You may need to exit your full screen view in Zoom to see the Chat icon. I have included a graphic on the screen of where you can find the Chat icon. You can then type your question in the chat box and please send it to Hosts and Panelists.

00:18:51.540 --> 00:19:11.259

Megan Stone - EMPSi: I'll read the question aloud for all participants to hear, and a US Fish and Wildlife Service team member will respond to your question aloud. We will try to answer your questions in the order that they are received and will do our best to respond to all the substantive questions we received this evening.

00:19:11.420 --> 00:19:18.260

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Again, please save any comments you have for the verbal public comment portion of this evening's meeting.

00:19:19.200 --> 00:19:23.779

Megan Stone - EMPSi: If you are joining us by phone and you would like to ask a question,

00:19:23.910 --> 00:19:29.160

Megan Stone - EMPSi: please press * 9 to raise your hand to let us know you have a question.

00:19:29.380 --> 00:19:45.099

Megan Stone - EMPSi: When it is your turn, I will identify you by the last 4 digits of your phone number. I will then unmute you so that you can ask your question. Again, a US Fish and Wildlife Service team member will then respond to your question aloud.

00:19:45.400 --> 00:19:59.940

Megan Stone - EMPSi: You may be muted on your end. If that is the case, we will prompt you to unmute yourself by pressing * 6. So, with that, we'll go ahead and get started, but we'll leave this screen up for the remainder of the Q&A.

00:20:01.190 --> 00:20:12.630

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Our first pre-registered question is, "What impact will this designation of critical habitat have on livestock grazing?" And we'll turn that over to Janelle.

00:20:14.080 --> 00:20:21.700

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: Thank you for the question. A critical habitat designation does not necessarily restrict any activities, nor does it close

00:20:22.240 --> 00:20:25.179

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: any activities on Federal lands.

00:20:25.390 --> 00:20:39.530

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: Though the designation of critical habitat may necessitate the initiation of consultation for ongoing practices, such as grazing. This is something that the Forest Service would do because they're the permitting agency for such actions.

00:20:40.170 --> 00:20:59.920

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: The Forest Service, after we designate critical habitat, will need to demonstrate that the actions they're authorizing, in this case the grazing permit, would not destroy or adversely modify critical habitat, such that the actions appreciably diminish the value of the critical habitat for the conservation of the butterfly.

00:21:02.160 --> 00:21:06.289

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Thank you, Janelle. We've got another question for you,

00:21:06.720 --> 00:21:15.899

Megan Stone - EMPSi: "Why block off a popular hiking area at Bailey Canyon? Surely you can plant in a more secluded area.

00:21:16.010 --> 00:21:18.490

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Will you place an alternate?"

00:21:21.900 --> 00:21:31.149

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: So again, habitat designation does not necessarily restrict any activities, nor does it close areas that are designated as critical habitat.

00:21:31.330 --> 00:21:38.119

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: The blocking off of Bailey Canyon is part of a habitat restoration project that the Forest is implementing,

00:21:38.260 --> 00:21:42.919

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: and the Forest will consult with us on any of these types of activities in the future

00:21:43.280 --> 00:21:50.259

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: for critical habitat and for the butterfly, where it occurs. However, again, designating critical habitat

00:21:50.460 --> 00:21:54.519

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: does not necessarily restrict or close off areas.

00:21:56.140 --> 00:21:57.350

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Thank you.

00:21:58.080 --> 00:22:10.470

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Our next question is, "Please detail how habitat will be protected and expanded for Sacramento Mountains checkerspot butterflies." We'll turn that over to Janelle again.

00:22:10.950 --> 00:22:12.000

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: Thank you.

00:22:12.030 --> 00:22:24.630

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: Currently we are writing a recovery plan for the butterfly, and the recovery plan will be our roadmap to conserving and recovering the species so that it no longer needs protection under the Endangered Species Act.

00:22:24.790 --> 00:22:39.089

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: Some of the objectives of the recovery plan are likely to include habitat restoration opportunities that would benefit the butterfly in its habitats by enhancing available suitable habitat and expanding on such habitat to provide for connectivity between meadows.

00:22:39.240 --> 00:22:57.959

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: Additionally, we plan to coordinate closely with the Forest Service as they implement projects in butterfly habitat on the forest. Some of these projects folks have seen implemented over the prior year include plantings that have occurred of nectar species in areas like Bailey's Meadow and along Bailey's Road and Pines Campground.

00:22:58.000 --> 00:23:00.579

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: The intent behind these projects is to

00:23:02.010 --> 00:23:10.160

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: supplement the existing nectar sources, so that butterfly adults have sufficient resources in order to successfully complete their life cycle.

00:23:12.630 --> 00:23:16.100

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Thank you, again. Our next question is,

00:23:16.230 --> 00:23:23.650

Megan Stone - EMPSi: "How can butterfly habitat be adequately protected from the impacts of cattle grazing?"

00:23:23.700 --> 00:23:26.069

Megan Stone - EMPSi: And, again, we'll turn that to you, Janelle.

00:23:26.650 --> 00:23:55.150

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: So, this is a more difficult question to answer, because it depends. Because every livestock operator manages their livestock in a different way, it's difficult to give a single answer that would fit all, or even some, of the scenarios that could protect butterfly habitat from grazing effects. However, an example of managing livestock grazing to reduce effects on butterfly habitat may be to alter the season of use, so that livestock are grazed in butterfly habitat outside of the summer adult flight season.

00:23:55.160 --> 00:24:07.370

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: This would help ensure that sufficient pollinator species are available for adults to feed on, and the New Mexico pentstemon is robust enough for egg laying and larval use until diapause in the winter.

00:24:09.670 --> 00:24:10.970

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Thank you.

00:24:11.350 --> 00:24:18.080

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Next question is, "Are there other species that would benefit by protection of this habitat?"

00:24:18.940 --> 00:24:23.780

Megan Stone - EMPSi: We'll turn that over to Janelle and see if Jackie has anything she'd like to add.

00:24:24.290 --> 00:24:31.809

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: Thank you. So, some of the critical habitat units do overlap with other listed species that occur on

00:24:31.920 --> 00:24:50.139

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: the forest in the Sacramento Mountains. Some of these species include large ranging species, such as Mexican spotted owl, as well as local endemics, such as the Sacramento Mountains thistle, Wright's marsh thistle, New Mexico meadow jumping mouse, and yellow-billed

00:24:50.240 --> 00:24:52.329

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: cuckoo.

00:24:55.430 --> 00:24:56.580

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Thank you.

00:24:57.760 --> 00:25:04.189

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Alright. Our next pre-registered question--and this is our last pre-registered question--

00:25:04.760 --> 00:25:13.400

Megan Stone - EMPSi: "Will the US Fish and Wildlife Service be offering opportunities for members of the community to volunteer to help with habitat?"

00:25:14.720 --> 00:25:27.200

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: Yes, absolutely. We will be doing volunteer opportunities in coordination with the Forest Service, and we have

used volunteers to help with habitat restoration work in the past, including planting native flowering species,

00:25:27.200 --> 00:25:45.339

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: conducting habitat surveys, and surveying for butterflies. If you would like to volunteer, please reach out to the local Forest Service Office so that they can notify you of upcoming habitat restoration projects and get you in contact with the Service when surveys for butterflies occur in this upcoming year.

00:25:47.830 --> 00:25:56.439

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Thank you, Janelle. Alright, so that is our last preregistered question. We'll move on to questions

00:25:56.480 --> 00:25:59.360

Megan Stone - EMPSi: that we've received live through the chat.

00:25:59.390 --> 00:26:14.599

Megan Stone - EMPSi: And I'll just provide a reminder that if anyone has a question they'd like to ask, if you're joining us by computer, you can type that question to us. So, those instructions are on the left side of the screen, you'll see that Chat icon.

00:26:14.670 --> 00:26:28.439

Megan Stone - EMPSi: And then if we have any phone callers, you can press * 9 to raise your hand and then we'll call on you by the last 4 digits of your phone number, and you can come on and ask your question.

00:26:28.890 --> 00:26:34.510

Megan Stone - EMPSi: So with that, we'll give it a moment while we wait for questions to come in.

00:27:36.640 --> 00:27:46.470

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Alright. Our first question is, "What will constitute successful outcomes to declassify the butterfly from the endangered species list?"

00:27:50.480 --> 00:27:52.159

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: Excuse me.

00:27:52.920 --> 00:27:58.559

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: We're still working through the process of developing the recovery plan that will identify the objectives

00:27:58.640 --> 00:28:09.220

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: that will provide measurable metrics to understand when we have successful outcomes to down-list and then de-list the species.

00:28:09.350 --> 00:28:19.109

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: Some of these successful outcomes are things such as reproducing populations that are stable, that are genetically viable in the wild;

00:28:19.160 --> 00:28:34.359

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: multiple populations occurring across it's currently occupied as well as into their historically occupied habitat; evidence that habitats have the connection ability, that the species can

00:28:34.370 --> 00:28:51.459

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: immigrate in between--immigrate and emigrate--in between occupied habitats so that we have that good genetic flow; and other things, such as a robust plant population that really supports the life history needs of the butterfly in general.

00:28:51.490 --> 00:29:06.569

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: Some of the other things that we would look at to determine successful outcomes are ameliorating the threats to the species or reducing them such that they are no longer considered a threat that is impacting the species itself.

00:29:09.170 --> 00:29:10.670

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Thank you, Janelle.

00:29:10.780 --> 00:29:33.859

Megan Stone - EMPSi: And I do see that we had one new phone caller just join. Just a reminder that we are currently in our question-and-answer session, and our phone callers are welcome to ask questions. If you have a question, you can press * 9 to raise your hand, and we'll go ahead and get you unmuted so that you can ask the Fish and Wildlife Service a question.

00:29:35.310 --> 00:29:41.430

Megan Stone - EMPSi: With that, we'll give it a moment while we wait for new live questions to come through in the chat.

00:29:55.840 --> 00:30:00.839

Megan Stone - EMPSi: I do see that we have a hand raised from one of our phone callers--

00:30:01.070 --> 00:30:08.570

Megan Stone - EMPSi: both of our phone callers, actually. I'll go ahead and unmute the first caller.

00:30:10.460 --> 00:30:16.360

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Hi, there. If you could go ahead and introduce yourself and ask your question, that would be great.

00:30:21.150 --> 00:30:28.400

Phone Caller 2 - 8662: So, what is the total number of butterflies that were seen within the last 3 years?

00:30:29.690 --> 00:30:41.260

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Thank you for that question. So, to repeat, that question was, "What was the total number of butterflies that were seen in the last 3 years?"

00:31:01.610 --> 00:31:06.590

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Janelle, did you want to go ahead and address that one?

00:31:06.740 --> 00:31:25.929

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: Yes, thank you. So, we've seen fewer than 50 butterflies in the wild in the past 3 years. Though we do have a substantial number, so more than 100 butterflies, that are--sorry, larvae of butterflies--that are currently in a captive propagation facility at the Albuquerque biopark.

00:31:27.290 --> 00:31:29.330

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Great thank you, Janelle.

00:31:29.570 --> 00:31:39.220

Megan Stone - EMPSi: And thank you, everyone, for your patience. Again, please note, there may be a pause between you asking your question and us responding.

00:31:39.270 --> 00:31:43.650

Megan Stone - EMPSi: We do have a follow-up question in the chat.

00:31:43.680 --> 00:31:50.269

Megan Stone - EMPSi: This is a follow-up to the first question regarding what constitutes a successful outcome.

00:31:50.560 --> 00:31:59.680

Megan Stone - EMPSi: This question is, "How can we be notified when the recovery plan is ready for public viewing?" And we'll turn that to Janelle.

00:32:02.430 --> 00:32:18.569

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: Once the recovery plan has been completed it will be so sent out for public review, and notification is sent out to interested members of the public, our partners, and other agencies that may be affected by the recovery plan.

00:32:18.590 --> 00:32:31.309

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: And we also put notification on our website as well. Once the recovery plan is published, it will also be posted to ECOS, which is the Fish and Wildlife's species page.

00:32:31.420 --> 00:32:48.180

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: And you can just go to ecos.fws.gov, search for Sacramento Mountains checkerspot butterfly and find all of the relevant documentation that has resulted from the listing of the species, as well as the development of the recovery plan.

00:32:49.420 --> 00:33:08.019

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Thank you, Janelle. And we can also try and get some of that information posted in the chat. With that, we will move to our next question, which is, "Does the Endangered Species Act require consideration of economic impacts as part of designating critical habitat?"

00:33:08.200 --> 00:33:10.539

Megan Stone - EMPSi: And we'll turn that over to Jackie.

00:33:11.050 --> 00:33:20.170

Jackie Albert - USFWS: Thanks, Megan. So yes, we are required to consider an economic impact that may result from a designation of critical habitat.

00:33:20.400 --> 00:33:48.210

Jackie Albert - USFWS: To assess this, we first evaluate specific land uses or activities and projects that may occur in the area, in the proposed critical habitat designation. We then evaluate the impacts that a specific critical habitat designation may have on restricting or modifying specific land uses or activities for the benefit of the species and its habitat within the areas proposed.

00:33:48.970 --> 00:34:01.740

Jackie Albert - USFWS: We then identify which conservation efforts may be the result of the species being listed under the Endangered Species Act, versus those attributed solely to the designation of critical habitat for the species.

00:34:02.090 --> 00:34:12.890

Jackie Albert - USFWS: The probable economic impact of a proposed critical habitat designation is analyzed by comparing scenarios both with critical habitat and without critical habitat.

00:34:13.610 --> 00:34:26.550

Jackie Albert - USFWS: For this critical habitat proposal, we developed an incremental effects memorandum considering the probable incremental economic impacts that may result from this proposed designation of critical habitat.

00:34:26.630 --> 00:34:40.099

Jackie Albert - USFWS: In some cases, private individuals may incur some costs as third-party applicants, but only when the action has a federal nexus, which means that

00:34:40.110 --> 00:34:47.029

Jackie Albert - USFWS: the private entity receives funding from a federal source or permits to carry out that activity.

00:34:47.190 --> 00:35:09.069

Jackie Albert - USFWS: So yes, the Service is required to consider potential economic impacts as well as any other benefits or impact of designating critical habitat. And we may exclude an area in the final critical habitat designation if the benefits of excluding it outweigh the benefits of including it, unless that would result in the extinction of the species.

00:35:11.140 --> 00:35:24.200

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Thank you for that response, Jackie. We'll go ahead and see if we have any more questions in the chat. We do have another hand raised, so I'll go ahead and unmute that person.

00:35:25.810 --> 00:35:27.869

Megan Stone - EMPSi: You can ask your question now.

00:35:35.760 --> 00:35:46.230

Phone Caller 2 - 8662: Since you're planting and having all this larvae. I still don't understand why are going to restrict hiking and biking

00:35:46.730 --> 00:35:48.789

Phone Caller 2 - 8662: in a popular area.

00:35:51.790 --> 00:35:59.510

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Thank you for that question. We will go ahead and place you back on mute and lower your hand.

00:36:01.150 --> 00:36:09.830

Megan Stone - EMPSi: So that question was, "Since there is efforts to plant and have larvae,

00:36:09.950 --> 00:36:16.450

Megan Stone - EMPSi: why is there a restriction of hiking and biking in a popular area?"

00:36:17.020 --> 00:36:23.250

Megan Stone - EMPSi: So, we will go ahead and turn that over

00:36:25.390 --> 00:36:26.690

Megan Stone - EMPSi: to the Service.

00:36:31.290 --> 00:36:33.110

Jackie Albert - USFWS: I can start us off.

00:36:33.560 --> 00:36:53.109

Jackie Albert - USFWS: So, the critical habitat designation itself is not restricting any activities, and the blocking off of any hiking areas are not a result of a proposed critical habitat designation or the final critical habitat designation, if and when that occurs.

00:36:53.170 --> 00:37:08.510

Jackie Albert - USFWS: The Forest Service and any activities occurring on Forest Service lands, the Forest Service will consult with us on any of their activities on their lands that may fall within the proposed boundaries of critical habitat and where the butterfly occurs.

00:37:11.570 --> 00:37:12.970

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Thank you, Jackie.

00:37:14.350 --> 00:37:15.740

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Alright,

00:37:18.460 --> 00:37:25.320

Megan Stone - EMPSi: at this point we are caught up with our pre-registered questions, the questions we received in the chat,

00:37:25.440 --> 00:37:27.300

Megan Stone - EMPSi: and our hands raised.

00:37:27.310 --> 00:37:32.639

Megan Stone - EMPSi: As a reminder, we'll be accepting questions for

00:37:32.670 --> 00:37:44.220

Megan Stone - EMPSi: about--let's see here... I think 15 minutes or so more, and then we'll go ahead and take a break before moving into our public comment session.

00:37:44.260 --> 00:37:50.439

Megan Stone - EMPSi: So, if you would like to provide a question, you can do so by chatting us those questions,

00:37:50.630 --> 00:37:53.790

Megan Stone - EMPSi: and you'll send those via the Zoom chat.

00:37:53.900 --> 00:38:00.850

Megan Stone - EMPSi: And then, if you'd like to ask a question and you're joining by phone, you can press * 9 to raise your hand

00:38:01.060 --> 00:38:05.750

Megan Stone - EMPSi: since those joining by phone don't have access to that chat feature.

00:38:05.960 --> 00:38:10.129

Megan Stone - EMPSi: So, we'll continue to monitor and see if we get any more questions

00:38:10.170 --> 00:38:13.809

Megan Stone - EMPSi: or hands raised. Thank you, everyone.

00:39:32.190 --> 00:39:35.450

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Alright, our next question is,

00:39:35.490 --> 00:39:41.820

Megan Stone - EMPSi: "Does critical habitat have geographically defined limits?" And we'll turn that over to Jackie.

00:39:42.690 --> 00:40:01.689

Jackie Albert - USFWS: Thanks. So yes, critical habitat does have defined geographical limits. Janelle had put up some maps during our presentation to show you exactly where those are. Those maps are also published in the Federal Register Notice and have detailed descriptions for each proposed critical habitat unit.

00:40:02.210 --> 00:40:06.119

Jackie Albert - USFWS: Our rules typically do not include any

00:40:06.450 --> 00:40:16.939

Jackie Albert - USFWS: developed areas like buildings, roads, airports, parking lots, piers, and similar facilities in the actual critical habitat designation.

00:40:16.990 --> 00:40:26.930

Jackie Albert - USFWS: We have accompanying text describing these areas, and critical habitat is designed to protect the essential physical or biological features of a landscape

00:40:27.010 --> 00:40:45.430

Jackie Albert - USFWS: and essential areas in the appropriate quantity and spatial arrangement that a species needs to survive and reproduce to ultimately be conserved. So, if you would like more information on those geographically defined limits, you can access that in the Federal Register.

00:40:45.610 --> 00:40:58.309

Jackie Albert - USFWS: The shapefiles for GIS are also posted online on our ECOS website. Additionally, the coordinates, or plot points, or both, on which

00:40:58.510 --> 00:41:10.940

Jackie Albert - USFWS: each proposed critical habitat unit falls is available on the New Mexico Ecological Services website, and at regulations.gov under the docket number

00:41:11.250 --> 00:41:14.219

Jackie Albert - USFWS: that we can provide in the chat. Thanks.

00:41:15.480 --> 00:41:16.860

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Thank you, Jackie.

00:41:18.550 --> 00:41:23.329

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Alright. We'll give it a few moments while we wait for more questions in the chat.

00:42:37.040 --> 00:42:50.200

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Thank you, everyone, for your patience as we wait for more questions in the chat. Just a reminder that if you'd like to chat as a question, we do still have time in our question-and-answer session.

00:42:50.390 --> 00:42:58.799

Megan Stone - EMPSi: You can go ahead and chat us a question using the instructions on the left of the screen, and then if you are joining by phone, you can

00:42:59.420 --> 00:43:04.379

Megan Stone - EMPSi: go ahead and use the Raise Hand feature to let us know you have a question.

00:43:04.940 --> 00:43:17.729

Megan Stone - EMPSi: And then we'll be accepting questions for a little bit longer, and once we are done with the question-and-answer session, we'll have a brief 30-minute break before moving into the comment

00:43:17.740 --> 00:43:25.429

Megan Stone - EMPSi: period of this evening's meeting. Once we move into the comment period, we'll be focusing on hearing

00:43:25.590 --> 00:43:28.959

Megan Stone - EMPSi: everyone's comments and we will

00:43:28.980 --> 00:43:33.220

Megan Stone - EMPSi: not be addressing questions during that phase of the meeting.

00:43:33.590 --> 00:43:40.959

Megan Stone - EMPSi: So, with that we'll go ahead and get prepared to address our next questions in the chat.

00:43:42.430 --> 00:43:45.210

Megan Stone - EMPSi: And our next question is,

00:43:46.930 --> 00:44:02.170

Megan Stone - EMPSi: "What is the Service instructing the US Forest Service concerning removal of feral horses? What is the Service instructing the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish concerning managing the elk population?"

00:44:03.430 --> 00:44:06.330

Megan Stone - EMPSi: And we will turn that over to Janelle.

00:44:15.280 --> 00:44:37.270

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: Thank you for that question. The Service does not have regulatory authority over feral horses or elk populations that may occur on the forest. However, we will continue to work closely with the Forest and other managing agencies, such as in the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, to support the management or removal of feral horses and the management of elk populations on the forest.

00:44:38.860 --> 00:44:44.339

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Thank you, Janelle. Alright, our next question is,

00:44:44.580 --> 00:44:50.989

Megan Stone - EMPSi: "What is the major importance of blocking off critical habitat?"

00:44:51.160 --> 00:44:53.420

Megan Stone - EMPSi: And we'll turn that over to Jackie.

00:44:54.010 --> 00:44:56.069

Jackie Albert - USFWS: Thanks, Megan. So,

00:44:56.620 --> 00:45:03.839

Jackie Albert - USFWS: by proposing or designating critical habitat, we are not blocking it off by any means. We don't close it off.

00:45:03.890 --> 00:45:16.229

Jackie Albert - USFWS: Designating critical habitat is an administrative action, and it does not restrict any activities in the action itself of designating critical habitat.

00:45:16.570 --> 00:45:28.360

Jackie Albert - USFWS: Once we do propose critical habitat and designate it, we make sure to work with our Federal partners, but we have no intention of blocking these areas off due to the designation of critical habitat.

00:45:30.680 --> 00:45:32.140

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Thank you, Jackie.

00:45:35.530 --> 00:45:40.570

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Alright, we'll give it a moment here as we wait for more questions.

00:45:41.080 --> 00:45:44.360

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Alright, I do see a new question in the chat now.

00:45:45.040 --> 00:45:53.149

Megan Stone - EMPSi: "From the larvae found from the butterflies, how many successfully reach adulthood?" And we'll turn that over to Janelle.

00:45:55.550 --> 00:46:07.519

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: So, thus far from the larvae that we have been able to collect, we've only had a handful of individuals reach adulthood. However, this is not uncommon. Butterflies in the wild who oviposit

00:46:07.770 --> 00:46:24.110

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: typically have a very low success rate of hatching out larvae that actually reach adulthood, and that rate could be as high as 90% mortality between diapause, predators, disease, and other things that could impact the life history of the butterfly itself.

00:46:27.200 --> 00:46:28.610

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Thank you, Janelle.

00:46:29.890 --> 00:46:33.959

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Alright, we have caught up with the questions in the chat.

00:46:34.260 --> 00:46:41.309

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Thank you, everyone, for your question so far this evening, and to the Service for those responses.

00:46:41.410 --> 00:46:52.520

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Again, we do still have a little bit of time in our Q&A session this evening, so we'll continue to keep an eye out for any hands raised or any chat questions,

00:46:52.820 --> 00:46:58.600

Megan Stone - EMPSi: and those instructions are up on the screen.
Thanks, everyone, for your patience.

00:48:33.820 --> 00:48:44.830

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Alright, our next question is, "Are there any voluntary conservation tools available to private landowners?" And we'll turn that over to Jackie.

00:48:47.880 --> 00:48:49.070

Jackie Albert - USFWS: Thank you.

00:48:49.160 --> 00:48:59.719

Jackie Albert - USFWS: So yes, there are multiple avenues that private property owners can engage in to support this species and promote conservation on their private land.

00:48:59.840 --> 00:49:05.880

Jackie Albert - USFWS: One tool would be through the development of a conservation agreement with us, the Service.

00:49:05.890 --> 00:49:24.699

Jackie Albert - USFWS: So, we're committed to working collaboratively with landowners and Federal agencies to achieve management goals while ensuring compliance with the Endangered Species Act. We recommend early consultation by project proponents to identify and recommend ways to avoid any potential conflicts.

00:49:27.590 --> 00:49:29.110

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Thank you, Jackie.

00:49:34.190 --> 00:49:49.349

Megan Stone - EMPSi: And just in case we had any new phone callers join us, or anyone new on the meeting, we are currently in the question-and-answer session. We have around 10 more minutes before we go ahead and take a 30-minute break.

00:49:49.560 --> 00:50:04.969

Megan Stone - EMPSi: After that break we'll go ahead and move into the public comment session to hear any verbal comments you have on the critical habitat designation. Until then, we'll keep an eye out for hands raised and chat questions.

00:51:10.600 --> 00:51:18.499

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Alright, our next question is, "What is the current listing status of the butterfly?" And we'll turn that over to Jackie.

00:51:19.710 --> 00:51:29.889

Jackie Albert - USFWS: Thank you. So, the Butterfly was listed as an endangered species under the Act on January 31st, 2023, which Janelle mentioned in our presentation.

00:51:30.350 --> 00:51:40.880

Jackie Albert - USFWS: An assessment team prepared the current Condition Assessment Report for the butterfly, and the team was composed of Service biologists in consultation with other species experts.

00:51:40.920 --> 00:51:55.249

Jackie Albert - USFWS: The report represents a compilation of the best scientific and commercial data available concerning the status of the butterfly, including impacts of past and present factors, both negative and beneficial, affecting the butterfly.

00:51:55.600 --> 00:52:09.290

Jackie Albert - USFWS: We determined that the butterfly is in danger of extinction due to the following threats: incompatible grazing, recreation, climate change, invasive and non-native plants, and an altered wildfire regime.

00:52:09.590 --> 00:52:27.240

Jackie Albert - USFWS: In accordance with our joint policy on peer review, and our memorandum from August of 2016, which updated and clarified the role of peer review of listing actions under the Act, we solicited independent scientific review of the information contained in that report.

00:52:27.470 --> 00:52:45.510

Jackie Albert - USFWS: As was discussed in the proposed rule, both the proposed listing rule and the final listing rule, we sent the report to 5 appropriate and independent peer reviewers and received 3 responses, and the peer reviews can be found at regulations.gov.

00:52:45.600 --> 00:52:55.799

Jackie Albert - USFWS: In preparing this proposed rule, we incorporated the results of these reviews, as appropriate, which was the foundation for both listing and critical habitat for this species.

00:53:01.040 --> 00:53:02.570

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Thank you, Jackie.

00:53:26.020 --> 00:53:32.189

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Alright, looks like we have about 5 more minutes in our Q&A session, so if anyone

00:53:32.220 --> 00:53:50.749

Megan Stone - EMPSi: would like to ask any last-minute questions, please feel free to do so. Again, those instructions are up on the screen. If you're joining us by phone, you can press * 9 to access that Raise Hand feature, and if you are joining us by computer, please chat us your questions.

00:53:51.460 --> 00:53:54.469

Megan Stone - EMPSi: With that, I do see that we have a new question,

00:53:54.520 --> 00:54:04.659

Megan Stone - EMPSi: which is, "Will there be opportunity to update and correct erroneous information contained in the descriptions of critical habitat

00:54:04.770 --> 00:54:11.500

Megan Stone - EMPSi: and information in the species condition Assessment Report?" And we'll turn that over to Janelle.

00:54:14.240 --> 00:54:18.469

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: So, yes, all of the comments submitted during the comment period

00:54:18.660 --> 00:54:40.300

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: will be considered and critical habitat or the current Condition Assessment Report may be revised based on that new information, if it's appropriate. Even after the comment period closes, we still accept new information and consider any changes that may be necessary, as we have time, or we work on other documents, such as the upcoming recovery plan.

00:54:40.440 --> 00:54:48.019

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: We'll add anything we can into the final critical habitat rule that is appropriate that could change our decisions.

00:54:50.850 --> 00:54:52.210

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Thank you, Janelle.

00:55:19.230 --> 00:55:20.350

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Alright,

00:55:21.150 --> 00:55:39.420

Megan Stone - EMPSi: at this point we are caught up with the questions in the chat, and I don't see any hands raised, but again, we'll keep an eye out. And then we will take a break in a minute or two for 30 minutes, and then we'll be looking forward to hearing everyone's comments when we get back from that 30-minute break.

00:56:23.230 --> 00:56:27.160

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Alright, our next question is,

00:56:27.450 --> 00:56:35.710

Megan Stone - EMPSi: "Can you clarify? You mentioned that recreation was one of the factors identified as a threat to the species survival.

00:56:35.810 --> 00:56:44.760

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Earlier, I believe it was stated that hiking and biking would not be restricted from the area designated as critical habitat.

00:56:45.130 --> 00:56:46.839

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Can you clarify this?"

00:56:47.990 --> 00:56:55.760

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: So, as mentioned, recreation is considered a threat to the species, because it has been known to modify habitat

00:56:56.030 --> 00:57:08.460

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: that is suitable for the butterfly. And so, what this means is that we've seen some areas that vegetation has been removed to provide for camping areas, people have built things like

00:57:09.650 --> 00:57:23.589

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: fire pits and things that take away vegetation that is sometimes important to the butterfly. And so, those type of modifications that occur because of recreation are things that we consider to be a threat to the species itself.

00:57:24.130 --> 00:57:41.410

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: However, as we did mention, the designation of critical habitat does not automatically close an area or restrict

any activities on those areas. That is outside-- it's just an administrative designation, and any of those types of actions would be done

00:57:41.730 --> 00:57:45.329

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: by the Forest Service,

00:57:45.420 --> 00:57:49.990

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: potentially in conjunction with the Service depending on if consultation is needed or not.

00:57:53.450 --> 00:57:54.790

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Thank you, Janelle.

00:57:55.910 --> 00:58:02.100

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Alright, we probably have time for one more question before we go ahead and go to our break.

00:58:02.980 --> 00:58:07.659

Megan Stone - EMPSi: So, we'll keep an eye out to see if we have any more questions.

00:58:43.190 --> 00:58:52.390

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Alright, our next question is, "Can critical habitat be applied to other areas in the future?" We'll turn that over to Janelle.

00:58:52.970 --> 00:59:12.909

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: So yes, critical habitat may be applied to other areas in the future, assuming that we go through all of the rulemaking processes that are necessary to designate critical habitat. We could designate critical habitat in the future in other areas because we recognize that habitat is dynamic and species move from one area to another over time,

00:59:13.520 --> 00:59:24.510

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: and that critical habitat designated at a particular point in time may not include all of the habitat areas that we may later determine are necessary for the recovery of the species.

00:59:25.320 --> 00:59:38.969

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: However, this specific critical habitat designation is only what is included in the proposed rule, and that may change if we go through a new rulemaking process. And so, the designated critical habitat will often not change until then.

00:59:39.100 --> 00:59:49.649

Janelle Alleman - USFWS: For those reasons, a critical habitat designation may change in the future, but does not signal that habitat outside of the designated area is unimportant or may not be needed for recovery of the species.

00:59:52.120 --> 00:59:53.910

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Thank you, Janelle.

00:59:54.250 --> 01:00:00.580

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Alright, thank you, everyone, again, for those questions and for participating in that Q&A.

01:00:00.600 --> 01:00:04.589

Megan Stone - EMPSi: We'll go ahead and move into our 30-minute break.

01:00:04.790 --> 01:00:18.350

Megan Stone - EMPSi: I'll pause the recording for now, but we will leave this meeting open. If you'd like to stay on, you're welcome to do so. We'll continue to have it open, and you're welcome to rejoin if that works better for you as well.

01:00:18.590 --> 01:00:28.480

Megan Stone - EMPSi: We'll reconvene at 6:30 Mountain Time, and I'll come back and provide some instructions for the verbal public comment session.

01:00:28.790 --> 01:00:30.239

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Thank you, everyone.

01:00:47.730 --> 01:00:55.700

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Hello, everyone. We're going to go ahead and get started with the verbal public hearing portion of tonight's meeting

01:00:55.790 --> 01:01:09.519

Megan Stone - EMPSi: to receive comments related to the proposed critical habitat for the Sacramento Mountains checkerspot butterfly. It's currently 6:30 PM Mountain Time, so we'll get started.

01:01:09.830 --> 01:01:23.850

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Again, this verbal public hearing, along with your comments, is being recorded as part of the official record. As a reminder, your camera and mic control settings are restricted during this time.

01:01:24.060 --> 01:01:31.880

Megan Stone - EMPSi: You will only be unmuted if and when you are unmuted, so please remember to speak when prompted.

01:01:32.160 --> 01:01:45.550

Megan Stone - EMPSi: The US Fish and Wildlife Service wants to hear from all members of the public, so we'll use the following guidelines today. First, please be mindful of the length of your comment. So that everyone who wants to speak

01:01:45.680 --> 01:01:48.179

Megan Stone - EMPSi: has an opportunity to do so,

01:01:48.400 --> 01:02:02.369

Megan Stone - EMPSi: we ask that you keep your comment limited to around 5 minutes this evening. We're going to do our best to get through our list of commenters who selected they wanted to offer a comment when registering for today's meeting,

01:02:02.440 --> 01:02:08.750

Megan Stone - EMPSi: and to save some time for those who may want to offer their comments who did not pre-register.

01:02:09.260 --> 01:02:20.709

Megan Stone - EMPSi: If we do not get the opportunity for you to offer your full comment today, you can submit your written comments, and we'll provide information again this evening

01:02:20.750 --> 01:02:22.130

Megan Stone - EMPSi: later on.

01:02:22.570 --> 01:02:29.910

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Second, please be respectful of others in their viewpoints. Third, please refrain from using profanity.

01:02:30.390 --> 01:02:41.560

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Comments will be accepted in the order that people registered. Again, if you registered before the start time of tonight's meeting, you are on our pre-registered commenter list.

01:02:41.760 --> 01:02:55.360

Megan Stone - EMPSi: If you are on the commenter list, when it is your turn to provide your comment, we'll read your name aloud from the list

and display your name on the screen. We'll also display the name of the commenter who is next in line.

01:02:55.540 --> 01:03:15.589

Megan Stone - EMPSi: When you hear your name called out, please use the Raise Hand feature so that we know you are available and ready to offer your comment. You can access the Raise Hand feature by clicking on either the Reactions icon or the Participants List icon, which are both located at the bottom of your Zoom screen.

01:03:15.840 --> 01:03:22.190

Megan Stone - EMPSi: If you wave your mouse back and forth across the bottom of your Zoom screen, these icons should appear.

01:03:22.330 --> 01:03:28.159

Megan Stone - EMPSi: You may need to exit out of your full screen view in Zoom to see these icons.

01:03:28.320 --> 01:03:41.449

Megan Stone - EMPSi: You can then select the Raise Hand feature located either in the Reactions icon or at the bottom of your Participants List. Or, if you're calling in through the phone, please press * 9 to raise your hand.

01:03:41.730 --> 01:03:47.900

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Once you've raised your hand, you'll then be unmuted so that you can provide your verbal public comment.

01:03:48.340 --> 01:04:04.320

Megan Stone - EMPSi: You may be double muted. If that is the case, we will prompt you to unmute yourself on your end so that we can hear you. We ask that you please spell out your first and last name for the record before providing your verbal public comment,

01:04:04.430 --> 01:04:09.690

Megan Stone - EMPSi: and if you are representing an organization or group, please say so during your comment.

01:04:10.200 --> 01:04:20.639

Megan Stone - EMPSi: After you've provided your comment, we'll mute you and move on to our next commenter. Again, once we've worked our way through the current list of pre-registered commenters,

01:04:20.700 --> 01:04:26.180

Megan Stone - EMPSi: we'll move on to those who registered after the start time of today's meeting.

01:04:26.250 --> 01:04:33.479

Megan Stone - EMPSi: And then, after that, if we still have time remaining, we'll open the meeting up to anyone who would like to provide a comment,

01:04:33.520 --> 01:04:39.799

Megan Stone - EMPSi: regardless of whether you check the box 'yes' to comment when registering for today's meeting.

01:04:41.150 --> 01:04:42.659

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Next slide, please.

01:04:46.100 --> 01:04:52.800

Megan Stone - EMPSi: On the screen here, we've included some graphics. On the left you can see the Reactions icon

01:04:52.810 --> 01:04:56.780

Megan Stone - EMPSi: which is one way that you can find the Raise Hand feature.

01:04:57.150 --> 01:05:02.510

Megan Stone - EMPSi: On the right you can see the Participants List icon. So, we'll leave that up for a moment

01:05:02.850 --> 01:05:06.360

Megan Stone - EMPSi: so folks can get acquainted with where those buttons are.

01:05:08.660 --> 01:05:10.999

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Alright, next slide, please.

01:05:13.870 --> 01:05:18.919

Megan Stone - EMPSi: With that, we'll go ahead and get started with our first pre-registered commenter

01:05:18.940 --> 01:05:20.829

Megan Stone - EMPSi: who is Tom Paterson.

01:05:22.090 --> 01:05:29.389

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Tom, if you'd like to provide a comment please access that Raise Hand feature and we'll go ahead and get you unmuted.

01:05:31.660 --> 01:05:32.660

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Perfect.

01:05:33.770 --> 01:05:35.760

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Hi, Tom, can you hear us?

01:05:37.700 --> 01:05:44.209

Tom Paterson: Yes, yes. Thank you.

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Can you tell your first and last name for the record, please?

01:05:44.250 --> 01:05:47.659

Tom Paterson: T-O-M, P-A-T-E-R-S-O-N.

01:05:47.780 --> 01:05:53.300

Tom Paterson: My question goes to--or my comment goes to...

01:05:53.610 --> 01:05:54.730

Tom Paterson: the

01:05:55.250 --> 01:06:07.970

Tom Paterson: listing designation information you provided indicates that the problem with grazing is elk and feral horse grazing.

01:06:08.220 --> 01:06:10.840

Tom Paterson: And yet

01:06:10.860 --> 01:06:12.409

Tom Paterson: you just call it

01:06:12.640 --> 01:06:17.279

Tom Paterson: 'grazing' as one of the primary factors causing

01:06:17.420 --> 01:06:19.770

Tom Paterson: the problem with habitat.

01:06:19.870 --> 01:06:28.959

Tom Paterson: It seems to me that the problem is not cattle grazing, but rather it's feral horse and elk grazing.

01:06:28.990 --> 01:06:32.979

Tom Paterson: And yet what's going to happen is cattle grazing will be banned.

01:06:33.030 --> 01:06:39.750

Tom Paterson: So, I am very interested in knowing, if you're going to be successful in this activity,

01:06:40.030 --> 01:06:54.439

Tom Paterson: you know, what's going to happen with the consultation with Forest Service and Department of Game and Fish over what the primary problems are on the destruction of the habitat for the butterfly--

01:06:54.480 --> 01:07:00.700

Tom Paterson: grazing by elk and feral horses, recreation,

01:07:00.720 --> 01:07:02.940

Tom Paterson: a conifer encroachment,

01:07:02.970 --> 01:07:06.020

Tom Paterson: you know. And you look at the top

01:07:06.280 --> 01:07:15.550

Tom Paterson: reasons why you're losing habit habitat for this butterfly, it's not cattle grazing. And yet, what's going to happen here is that

01:07:15.620 --> 01:07:30.030

Tom Paterson: livestock producers will be the ones who take it on the chin and will have to modify their cattle grazing operations. So, what you're doing or what we anticipate you're going to do,

01:07:30.070 --> 01:07:33.730

Tom Paterson: I think, treats the cattle grazing

01:07:33.840 --> 01:07:36.410

Tom Paterson: unfairly. Thank you.

01:07:37.550 --> 01:07:46.030

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Thank you for your comment, Tom. We'll go ahead and place you back on mute and move on to our next pre-registered commenter,

01:07:46.190 --> 01:07:48.950

Megan Stone - EMPSi: who is Cathy McCloskey.

01:07:49.960 --> 01:07:55.220

Megan Stone - EMPSi: And I don't see Cathy is on our list of

01:07:55.400 --> 01:08:01.629

Megan Stone - EMPSi: participants currently, so we'll give it a second here, and then we can circle back to them at the end of

01:08:02.800 --> 01:08:12.200

Megan Stone - EMPSi: the meeting. So, with that, we'll go ahead and move on to our next pre-registered commenter, who is Charles Fox.

01:08:13.980 --> 01:08:18.680

Megan Stone - EMPSi: I also don't see Charles on our list of participants currently.

01:08:18.760 --> 01:08:26.219

Megan Stone - EMPSi: We'll give it a moment here, and then we can always circle back to Charles in case they join later on.

01:08:28.569 --> 01:08:33.199

Megan Stone - EMPSi: With that, we'll move on to our next pre-registered commenter,

01:08:33.500 --> 01:08:35.170

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Bette Korber.

01:08:39.350 --> 01:08:47.929

Megan Stone - EMPSi: I don't see Bette on our current list of participants. So again, we can circle back to Bette.

01:08:50.270 --> 01:08:57.090

Megan Stone - EMPSi: With that, we'll move on to our next pre-registered commenter, Elizabeth Roybal.

01:08:58.510 --> 01:09:01.979

Megan Stone - EMPSi: And I also don't see Elizabeth on

01:09:02.189 --> 01:09:19.129

Megan Stone - EMPSi: our current list, so we'll make a note of that and see if those folks can join us later on to provide their comments. With that, we've worked our way through the folks who indicated they wanted to provide a comment when registering for this evening's meeting,

01:09:19.170 --> 01:09:28.010

Megan Stone - EMPSi: and at this point we'll open up the meeting to anyone who would like to comment, regardless of whether you signed up when registering.

01:09:28.090 --> 01:09:32.879

Megan Stone - EMPSi: So, if you'd like to provide a comment at this time, you're welcome to do so.

01:09:33.040 --> 01:09:45.290

Megan Stone - EMPSi: You can access that Raise Hand feature by either going to the Reactions icon or your participants list. Or, if you're joining by phone, you can press * 9 on your keypad.

01:09:46.210 --> 01:09:53.580

Megan Stone - EMPSi: And we will leave the screen up just so folks have those instructions in case they'd like to comment.

01:09:53.800 --> 01:10:03.230

Megan Stone - EMPSi: You can also see at the bottom of your screen there's instructions for how you can provide written comments via regulations.gov.

01:10:03.270 --> 01:10:14.640

Megan Stone - EMPSi: So, to do that, you'll take the URL that's listed on the screen, and we'll paste that in the chat as well. You'll enter that in your browser, and then

01:10:14.730 --> 01:10:24.330

Megan Stone - EMPSi: once that page comes up there'll be a search box where you can enter the docket number FWS-R2

01:10:24.420 --> 01:10:28.110

Megan Stone - EMPSi: -ES-2023

01:10:28.130 --> 01:10:30.840

Megan Stone - EMPSi: -0023,

01:10:31.220 --> 01:10:40.079

Megan Stone - EMPSi: and then you'll click on the button that says 'Comment Now,' and that will enable you to submit written comments electronically.

01:10:40.850 --> 01:10:53.089

Megan Stone - EMPSi: So, again, we'll provide that information in the chat and we'll also leave this up on the screen for the remainder of

our meeting. With that, we'll keep an eye out for any hands raised we might have.

01:20:25.980 --> 01:20:39.909

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Hello, again, everyone. Just a reminder that we are currently in the public comment period of this evening's meeting. If anyone would like to provide a verbal public comment, you're welcome to do so.

01:20:40.060 --> 01:20:45.250

Megan Stone - EMPSi: You can access the Raise Hand feature to let us know you're ready to provide a comment.

01:20:45.410 --> 01:20:54.079

Megan Stone - EMPSi: And, if you are joining us by the phone, you can press * 9 on your phone keypad to let us know you're ready to offer your comment.

01:20:54.260 --> 01:21:12.290

Megan Stone - EMPSi: We'll keep an eye out for any hands raised, and for anyone who might join us later on and like to provide a comment. And, as a reminder, you can find information in the chat on how to submit comments electronically through regulations.gov.

01:21:12.490 --> 01:21:13.620

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Thank you.

01:34:43.520 --> 01:35:01.000

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Hello, again, everyone. We still do have a few folks on. Just a reminder that we'll be on and accepting public comments until 8:00 PM Mountain Time, so if there's anyone who would like to provide public comment, please feel free to do so.

01:35:01.100 --> 01:35:05.489

Megan Stone - EMPSi: You can raise your hand by using the Raise Hand feature.

01:35:05.620 --> 01:35:10.860

Megan Stone - EMPSi: You can find that through the Reactions icon or the Participants List.

01:35:11.010 --> 01:35:18.750

Megan Stone - EMPSi: And then, again, if you're joining us by phone, please use your phone keypad and press * 9 to raise your hand.

01:35:18.890 --> 01:35:28.760

Megan Stone - EMPSi: We'll continue to leave these instructions up on the screen, and the information on where written comments can be provided as well,

01:35:28.800 --> 01:35:35.330

Megan Stone - EMPSi: and we'll keep an eye out for any new attendees or anyone with their hand raised. Thank you.

01:45:46.500 --> 01:46:02.559

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Hello, again, everyone. I don't see that we have anyone new that's joined us, but just a reminder that we will be accepting comments for another 45 minutes here, so if you do want to provide a comment, we highly encourage you to do so.

01:46:02.570 --> 01:46:06.709

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Those instructions are up on the screen. Thank you, everyone.

02:07:03.390 --> 02:07:17.109

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Hello, again, everyone. We have about 25 more minutes in our public comment session this evening before we go ahead and provide closing remarks. So, if you'd like to provide a public comment,

02:07:17.190 --> 02:07:25.939

Megan Stone - EMPSi: please feel free to raise your hand. We'll continue to be available to listen to any comments you may have. Thank you.

02:20:25.190 --> 02:20:32.799

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Hello, again, everyone. We've got around 10 more minutes before we close out this evening's public meeting,

02:20:32.850 --> 02:20:41.929

Megan Stone - EMPSi: so if you'd like to provide a comment, please access that Raise Hand feature, and we'll be happy to get you unmuted so that you can provide your comment.

02:20:42.140 --> 02:20:43.220

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Thank you.

02:28:38.850 --> 02:28:50.340

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Hello, everyone. We've got a minute or two before we'll go ahead and provide some closing remarks. If anyone would like to provide a public comment, please feel free to do so.

02:28:50.510 --> 02:28:53.530

Megan Stone - EMPSi: We have those instructions up on the screen,

02:28:53.580 --> 02:29:02.360

Megan Stone - EMPSi: and you can also find the information on the screen for how to submit written comments electronically through regulations.gov.

02:29:02.540 --> 02:29:08.220

Megan Stone - EMPSi: You can also copy that information down from the Zoom chat. Thank you.

02:29:27.210 --> 02:29:33.099

Megan Stone - EMPSi: Alright, I don't see any hands raised. So, with that, we'll go ahead and move to the next slide.

02:29:41.940 --> 02:29:58.179

Megan Stone - EMPSi: On behalf of the Service, I want to thank everyone for attending this evening, for the questions that have been provided, and for the comments. I'd also like to thank all of our internal and external partners that have helped and supported us throughout this process.

02:29:58.210 --> 02:30:04.390

Megan Stone - EMPSi: We value the information and the technical expertise that has been provided to us along the way.

02:30:05.080 --> 02:30:14.150

Megan Stone - EMPSi: I also want to thank everyone who has provided or is willing to provide comments on this project. We look forward to receiving your input.

02:30:14.250 --> 02:30:22.980

Megan Stone - EMPSi: So, with that, we'll leave you with a reminder of how to submit those written comments. Again, you can do that through regulations.gov.

02:30:23.250 --> 02:30:37.849

Megan Stone - EMPSi: You'll visit the link on the screen (you can also find that in the chat box). Once you get to that page, you'll enter

the docket number, which is also listed on the screen, and click on 'Comment Now.'

02:30:37.890 --> 02:30:47.150

Megan Stone - EMPSi: The comment period does close on December 27th, 2023. We look forward to seeing your comments. Thank you and have a good night.

02:30:49.570 --> 02:30:50.460

Shawn Sartorius - USFWS: Thank you.