



News Release

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For Immediate Release

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SERVICE TO REOPEN THE COMMENT PERIOD ON PROPOSAL TO REMOVE JOHNSTON'S FRANKENIA FROM ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT PROTECTION

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is reopening the public comment period on the May 23, 2003, proposal to remove Johnston's frankenia (*Frankenia johnstonii*) from the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Plants. The Service is reopening the public comment period on the delisting proposal given the time that has lapsed since the 2003. The Service originally proposed delisting Johnston's frankenia on May 22, 2003, because the population and range of the species is greater than previously known and threats are not as severe as originally thought. Unfortunately, the Service was unable to finalize the delisting proposal due to higher priority listing actions.

At this time, the Service is also making available for public review and comment the Draft Post-Delisting Monitoring Plan for Johnston's frankenia. The Draft Post-Delisting Monitoring Plan was developed in cooperation with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, U.S. International Boundary and Water Commission, The Nature Conservancy, and Texas Department of Transportation.

The Johnston's frankenia is a plant endemic to south Texas in Webb, Zapata, and Starr Counties and an adjacent area in northeastern Mexico. It is a low-growing, perennial shrub that occurs in a clumped distribution on specialized habitats of hypersaline (very salty) soils. The range of the Johnston's frankenia in Texas is currently estimated to encompass 2,031 square miles (5,260 square kilometers). Currently, there are 88 reported populations in the United States and 4 in Mexico, with an estimated total number of individual plants exceeding 4 million.

Johnston's frankenia was listed on August 7, 1984, as endangered under the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Plants. The Service completed a recovery plan for Johnston's frankenia in 1988, but the plan did not quantify criteria for downlisting or delisting due to our lack of knowledge about the species. Since the recovery plan was completed, our knowledge of Johnston's frankenia has greatly increased.

If Johnston's frankenia is removed from the List of Endangered and Threatened and Plants, Federal agencies will no longer need to consult with the Service to ensure any action they authorize, fund, or carry out is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of this species.

The goal of the Service is to make implementation of the Endangered Species Act less complex, less contentious and more effective. The Service seeks to accelerate recovery of threatened and endangered species across the nation, while making it easier for people to coexist with these species.

For more information on the proposal and Draft Post-Delisting Monitoring Plan, what to comment on, or how to submit comments, see the *Federal Register* notice on our web site at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest>. We will accept comments received or postmarked on or before December 27, 2011.

For further information contact Michelle Shaughnessy, Assistant Regional Director, Ecological Services, Southwest Regional Office, P.O. Box 1306, Albuquerque, NM, 87103; by telephone (505-248-6671); or by facsimile (505-248-6788). If you use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD), call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 800-877-8339.

America's fish, wildlife and plant resources belong to all of us, and ensuring the health of imperiled species is a shared responsibility. We're working to actively engage conservation partners and the public in the search for improved and innovative ways to conserve and recover imperiled species. To learn more about the Endangered Species program, go to <http://www.fws.gov/endangered/>.

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. Connect with our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/usfws, follow our tweets at www.twitter.com/usfwshq, watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwshq>.

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