



# United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
New Mexico Ecological Services Field Office  
2105 Osuna NE  
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87113  
Phone: (505) 346-2525 Fax: (505) 346-2542

March 27, 2007

Dear Interested Party:

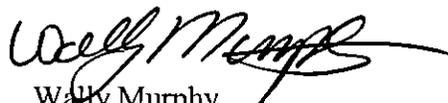
Enclosed is the Federal Register notice announcing the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's proposed designation of critical habitat for the Pecos sunflower (*Helianthus paradoxus*) (sunflower) under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended. On September 27, 2005, the Forest Guardians filed suit against the Service for failure to designate critical habitat for this species (Forest Guardians v. Hall 2005). On March 20, 2006, a settlement was reached that requires the Service to re-evaluate our original prudency determination. The settlement stipulated that, if prudent, a proposed rule would be submitted to the Federal Register for publication on or before March 16, 2007, and a final rule by March 16, 2008. We have prepared this proposed designation pursuant to the settlement agreement.

We are proposing to designate approximately 1579 acres (ac) (639 hectares (ha)) within the boundaries of the proposed critical habitat designation. Proposed critical habitat is located in Chaves, Cibola, Guadalupe, Socorro, and Valencia Counties, New Mexico, and in Pecos County, Texas.

As part of this designation, we will conduct an analysis of the economic impacts of designating these areas. We will also undertake a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis for this proposed critical habitat designation. We will publish a notice of availability and reopen the comment period in the Federal Register to accept public comments on the draft economic analysis and draft NEPA compliance documents.

We are soliciting comments on all of the lands proposed for critical habitat designation. Written comments are encouraged and should be received on or before May 26, 2007. Comments must be received by the closing date. Comments should be submitted to the New Mexico State Administrator, New Mexico Ecological Services Office, 2105 Osuna Road, NE, Albuquerque, New Mexico 87113. If you have any questions, please contact Lyle Lewis of my staff at the letterhead address or by calling (505) 761-4714.

Sincerely,

  
Wally Murphy  
Field Supervisor

Enclosure