



News Release

Public Affairs Office
PO Box 1306
Albuquerque, NM 87103
505/248-6911
505/248-6915 (Fax)

Southwest Region (Arizona • New Mexico • Oklahoma • Texas) www.fws.gov/southwest/

October 29, 2013

For Immediate Release

Contact: Steve Segin, 303-236-4578, robert_segin@fws.gov

Service Completes and Initiates Use of Black-footed Ferret Programmatic Safe Harbor Agreement

DENVER--The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has completed a Black-footed Ferret Programmatic Safe Harbor Agreement (SHA) in cooperation with State, Tribal, Federal, and local partners in 12 states after more than two years of collaborative effort. This SHA provides opportunities for private and Tribal landowners to volunteer their lands for reintroductions of this endangered species without affecting their land-use activities beyond mutually agreed-upon measures. It also extends these assurances to surrounding non-participating lands and other landowner interests. This SHA will be an important step in promoting the recovery of this iconic species.

The Service delivered a notice of availability (NOA) of a draft SHA and draft Environmental Assessment (EA) to the *Federal Register* for a 30-day public review and comment on December 19, 2012. An extension of the comment period and availability of the documents for public review and contact information was announced in the *Federal Register* on January 23, 2013.

The final SHA and EA will be available online at: at <http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/mammals/blackfootedferret/>

Anyone needing a printed or electronic copy of the SHA and EA or the NOA published in the *Federal Register* should contact the Service at 970-897-2730 or request a printed or electronic copy by e-mailing kimberly_tamkun@fws.gov.

As the first enrollees in this SHA in the country, Gary and Georgia Walker who ranch near Pueblo, Colorado, will welcome captive raised black-footed ferrets on their property this week. These soon to be wild animals have been preconditioned for release in the wild by living in prairie dog burrows in predator proof pens, as well as having had the opportunity to prey on these rodents which are their principal food in the wild.

“The return of this species to eastern Colorado is a testament to the State’s commitment to wildlife and the willingness of reasonable partners to accommodate both conservation and business interests,” said Mr. Walker.

The species was thought to be extinct in 1980 as a result of the decline of prairie dog populations and non-native disease, but now numbers approximately 300 individuals in captive breeding facilities across North American and approximately 500 individuals in the wild where previous reintroductions have occurred. Ferrets released at Walker ranch this fall will likely have young in the wild in the spring of 2014 as has been documented for most previous ferret reintroduction efforts.

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 <http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/> Connect with our Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/USFWSMountainPrairie> Follow our tweets at <http://twitter.com/USFWSMtnPrairie> Watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwsmtmprairie/>

-FWS-