



News Release

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INPUT SOUGHT IN REVIEW OF SOUTHWEST CALIFORNIA CONDOR PROGRAM -Open Houses Scheduled in Flagstaff and Kanab-

Phoenix, Ariz. – Land managers and condor biologists will hold open houses in Arizona and Utah to seek public input on an ongoing program to reintroduce California condors to the canyon lands and high plateaus of northern Arizona and southern Utah.

The evaluation team will host two public open houses in:

- Kanab, Utah, on Tuesday, October 3, 2006, 7-9 p.m. (Utah time) at the Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument - Kanab Visitor Center, 745 East Highway 89
- Flagstaff, Arizona, on Wednesday, October 4, 2006, 7-9 p.m. (Arizona time) at the Arizona Game and Fish Department Office, 3500 South Lake Mary Road.

The open houses will include presentations reviewing the reintroduction program and group discussions on various aspects of the program. Comments from the public, local governments, and agencies are requested. Comments will be accepted through October 31, 2006. Written comments may be mailed to Field Supervisor, Arizona Ecological Services Office, 2321 West Royal Palm Road, Suite 103, Phoenix, Arizona 85021-4951, faxed to (602) 242-2513, or brought to an open house.

“Local community support is a large part of the success of the Southwest condor recovery project,” said Steve Spangle, Fish and Wildlife Service’s Arizona Field Supervisor. “We look forward to updating local community members on the project and identifying any concerns or ideas that may improve the program.”

The open houses and call for comments are part of a federal rule establishing the experimental release program. The rule requires a review of the program every five years to gauge public acceptance of the program and its overall success and to solicit recommendations.

Condors are scavenger birds that soared over many parts of the United States since prehistoric times. Their numbers plummeted in the 20th century and in 1967 the condor was listed as an endangered species under a law predating the existing Endangered Species Act. Since initiation of the Arizona project in December 1996, 90 condors have been released into the wild in northern Arizona. The reintroduction program has also produced five young hatched in the wild. Currently, 56 free-flying condors are in the northern

Arizona/southern Utah population, including four young that have hatched in the wild. However, reintroduction efforts have been complicated by lead poisonings, bird-human interactions, and shootings. Thirty-three released birds have died and three have been returned to indefinite captivity.

The condors have been observed to fly long distances, but they generally have remained within the greater Grand Canyon ecosystem. Recently, some members of the population have been making regular flights to the vicinity of Zion National Park and spending a portion of their year there.

The release of California condors in northern Arizona is a joint public/private partnership between The Peregrine Fund, the Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Arizona Game and Fish Department, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, Coalition of Resources and Economies, The Phoenix Zoo, U.S. Forest Service, and other partners. The Peregrine Fund, a non-profit organization, is funding and conducting the releases and monitoring the condors.

The goal of the California Condor Recovery Plan is to establish two geographically separate, self-sustaining populations -- a primary population in California and the other outside of California, each with 150 birds and at least 15 breeding pairs. For information about the California condor program in Arizona, go to: www.peregrinefund.org or <http://www.fws.gov/arizonaes/> or www.azgfd.gov/w_c/california_condor.shtml.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: Photographs and B-roll of the California condor are available by contacting Jeff Humphrey (602-242-0210 or jeff_humphrey@fws.gov) or visiting <http://www.fws.gov/arizonaes/> and <http://images.fws.gov/>