



News Release

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Initiates Status Review of the Bay Skipper Butterfly

The bay skipper butterfly may warrant federal protection as an endangered or threatened species, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concluded, following an initial review of a petition seeking to protect the species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and to designate critical habitat.

Today's decision, commonly known as a 90-day finding, means the information provided in the petition, and available in the Service's files, indicates that listing might be appropriate for the bay skipper. This action is not a formal proposal. The Service will now undertake a more thorough status review of the species, known as a 12-month finding, throughout its entire range to determine whether to propose it for listing under the ESA.

The bay skipper is a small, dusky orange and brown butterfly found only in marshes along the Gulf Coastal Plain. Only two populations are currently known, one in Hancock County, Mississippi, and one in Chambers and Jefferson counties, Texas.

To ensure this status review is comprehensive, the Service is soliciting information from state and federal natural resource agencies and all interested parties regarding the bay skipper and its habitat. Based on the status review, the Service will make one of three possible determinations:

- (1) Listing is not warranted, in which case no further action will be taken.
- (2) Listing as threatened or endangered is warranted. In this case, the Service will publish a proposal to list, solicit independent scientific peer review of the proposal, seek input from the public, and consider the input before a final decision about listing the species is made. In general, there is a one-year period between the time a species is proposed and the final decision.
- (3) Listing is warranted but precluded by other, higher priority activities. This means the species is added to the federal list of candidate species, and the proposal to list is deferred while the Service works on listing proposals for other species that are at greater risk. A warranted but precluded finding requires subsequent annual reviews of the finding until such time as either a listing proposal is published, or a not warranted finding is made based on new information.

The Endangered Species Act provides a critical safety net for America's native fish, wildlife and plants. This landmark conservation law has prevented the extinction of hundreds of imperiled species across the nation and promoted the recovery of many others.

Anyone wishing to submit information regarding the bay skipper may: (1) go to the Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov> and follow the instructions for submitting comments; or, (2) use U.S. mail or hand-delivery to: Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS-R4-ES-2011-0012; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 222; Arlington, VA 22203.

The Service will post all information received on <http://www.regulations.gov>. This generally means that any personal information provided will be posted.

Please note that submissions merely stating support for, or opposition to, the action under consideration without providing supporting information, although noted, will not be considered in making a determination. The ESA says that determinations as to whether any species is threatened or endangered must be made "solely on the basis of the best scientific and commercial data available."

Information must be received by September 12, 2011.

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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