



News Release

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Unveils Draft Mexican Spotted Owl Recovery Plan, First Revision

Public comment sought

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) will announce on June 24 that the Draft Recovery Plan (Draft Plan), first revision, for the Mexican spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis lucida*) under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) is available in the *Federal Register*. The Service is requesting review and comment on this Draft Plan from local, state, and federal agencies; tribes; and the public. The Service will also accept any new information on the status of the Mexican spotted owl throughout its range to assist in finalizing the revised recovery plan. A 60-day public comment period begins with the publication of this notice.

The Service completed the original recovery plan for the Mexican spotted owl on October 16, 1995. However, updates on status information and experience in implementing the original recovery plan led to the determination that a revision was warranted. The Draft Plan published today contains recovery criteria based on maintaining and increasing population numbers and habitat quality and quantity. The Draft Plan also focuses on protecting existing populations, managing for replacement nest/roost habitat, managing threats, monitoring population trends and habitat, monitoring plan implementation, and building partnerships to facilitate recovery.

This subspecies occurs in the states of Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, and Utah, south through the Sierra Madre Occidental and Sierra Madre Oriental in Mexico. The Mexican spotted owl nests and roosts in forested areas exhibiting multilayered, uneven-aged tree structure, and in steep, rocky canyonlands. Forested habitats used by the owl vary throughout its range and by activity

(nesting, roosting, foraging, dispersal/migration). However, the forest types believed most important to Mexican spotted owls are mixed conifer, pine-oak, and riparian habitats.

Threats to the owl's population in the United States have transitioned from commercial-based timber harvest at the time of listing, to the risk of stand-replacing wildfire. The revised recovery plan recommends protection of currently occupied home ranges, plus development of replacement nesting/roosting habitat over time. The plan recognizes the need to manage these forest landscapes to minimize the effects of large, stand-replacing wildfires, believed to be the greatest current threat to the species.

To review a copy of the Draft Plan, visit <http://www.fws.gov/endangered/species/recovery-plans.html> or contact the Arizona Ecological Services Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2321 West Royal Palm Road, Phoenix, Arizona 85021-4951; telephone (602) 242-0210.

Comments can be submitted on the Draft Plan by one of the following methods:

- U.S. mail: Field Supervisor, at the above address;
- Hand-delivery: Arizona Ecological Services Office at the above address;
- Fax: (602) 242-2513; or
- E-mail: *Comments on the Draft Mexican Spotted Owl Recovery Plan can be e-mailed to IncomingAZcorr@fws.gov. Please write: "MSO Recovery Plan" in the subject line.*

Comments must be received within 60 days, on or before August 23, 2011. For more information about the Mexican spotted owl, visit <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/mso/>.

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. The unprecedented challenge of climate change and its broad, complex impacts on species and habitat make it even more imperative to have an effective, collaborative approach to conserving and recovering imperiled species.

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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