



News Release

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PETITION TO PROTECT RARE SOUTHWEST PLANT FOUND ADEQUATE -CONSIDERATION FOR ENDANGERED SPECIES STATUS PROCEEDS-

The Fish and Wildlife Service has found that a petition to protect the rare Gentry indigo bush under the Endangered Species Act provides sufficient information to warrant further consideration. A time frame to review the plant's status and threats has been initiated as a result of a court settlement and the Service is seeking scientific and commercial information prior to determining whether to propose adding it to the list of threatened or endangered species. The plant occurs in a few isolated canyons in southeastern Arizona and northwest Sonora, Mexico.

The Gentry indigo bush (*Dalea tentaculoides*) is an erect perennial shrub of the pea family that grows up to 3 feet tall. It flowers in rose-purple clusters in spring and may produce a second set of flowers following monsoon rains in late summer and fall. Plants are usually found on floodplain terraces within isolated canyons and are adapted to the periodic, low-intensity flooding that frequents confined canyons.

In Arizona, the Gentry indigo bush occurs in Sycamore Canyon in the Atascosa Mountains west of Nogales, where plant numbers vary greatly. An estimated 1,400 plants grew in the canyon prior to a 1993 flood that reduced the population to 15-30 individuals – by 1997, there were almost 500. The population from Mendoza Canyon, on the northwest edge of Altar Valley is thought to be lost and the status of historically documented populations from the Baboquivari Mountains on the Tohono O'odham Nation is unknown. In Mexico, the Gentry indigo bush is known to occur at only two locations in Sonora, but plant numbers and threats are unknown.

The combination of small population size, reduced reproductive potential, and isolation makes this species vulnerable to extinction. Threats to the species include plant community changes, and increased erosion and flood-flows resulting from past grazing practices, mining and road construction. Sycamore Canyon is designated as a Natural Research Area where grazing is not permitted, however cattle trespassing from Mexico and undocumented alien and drug smugglers traffic likely degrade Gentry indigo bush habitat there.

The petition to list the Gentry indigo bush with critical habitat was submitted by the Center for Biological Diversity in January 2002. Funding constraints prevented Service review of the petition. The federal district court in Arizona ordered the Service to proceed. Following today's finding, the Service has until September 15 to determine whether listing is warranted, not warranted or warranted but precluded by other species listings.

Dalea status and threat information, comments or questions concerning this petition and finding should be submitted to the Field Supervisor, Arizona Ecological Services State Office, 2321 West Royal Palm Road, Suite 103, Phoenix, Arizona. 85021-4951 prior to April 4, 2005.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies. Visit the Service's website at <http://www.fws.gov>.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: Photographs of Gentry indigo bush and its habitat are available by contacting Jeff Humphrey (602-242-0210 or jeff_humphrey@fws.gov) or at http://arizonaes.fws.gov/image_library.htm (at low resolution).