



# News Release

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## **Service Seeks Public Input on Draft Conservation Agreement with Assurances for the Dunes Sagebrush Lizard**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has received a Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA) document for the dunes sagebrush lizard. Through a formal scoping process, the Service is seeking public input to facilitate early identification of issues and concerns that will assist the agency with development of an Environmental Assessment to assist with future decision-making.

Following the scoping period, the draft Environmental Assessment will be developed and once completed, will be available to the public with the CCAA and the permit application for review and comment.

CCAA's are voluntary and provide non-federal landowners and industry the opportunity to implement proactive conservation practices that address specific threats to imperiled species. In turn, the landowner receives assurances that, if the species eventually becomes listed under the Endangered Species Act, they can continue to manage their land as outlined in their agreements, with no additional requirements.

The Service has already completed a substantial 90-day finding on a petition to list the dunes sagebrush lizard and will begin the process of determining whether it warrants listing under the ESA through a scientifically rigorous status review. Through careful planning, proactive conservation and implementation of a CCAA, voluntary conservation could reduce the need to list the species.

The dunes sagebrush lizard is native to a small area of southeast New Mexico and west Texas. The species is a habitat specialist and occurs only in sand dune complexes associated with shinnery oak. The primary threat to the lizard is the loss of habitat associated with oil and gas development, including the mining of sand necessary for hydraulic fracturing in oil and gas production, near and in dune complexes. This has resulted in increased fragmentation of their habitat and gaps in the species' range.

The Service encourages the public to provide input and substantive comments during the 30-day public scoping period July 16, 2020 to August 17, 2020. The CCAA document is available online at <https://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/AustinTexas/>. The Federal Register Notice will be available on July 16, 2020 in the *Federal Register* and one day prior to that in the Reading Room at

<https://www.federalregister.gov/public-inspection> on the 2020 Notices link under Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants.

The Service seeks to accelerate recovery of threatened and endangered species across the nation, while making it easier for people to coexist with these species. To learn more about the Endangered Species Program, visit <http://www.fws.gov/endangered/>.

*The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service works with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit <http://www.fws.gov/>. Connect with our [Facebook page](#), follow our [tweets](#), watch our [YouTube Channel](#) and download photos from our [Flickr page](#).*

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