



News Release

Public Affairs Office
PO Box 1306
Albuquerque, NM 87103
505/248-6911
505/248-7401 (Fax)

Southwest Region (Arizona • New Mexico • Oklahoma • Texas) www.fws.gov/southwest/

For Release: September 6, 2017

Contacts: Adam Zerrenner, 512-490-0057, adam_zerrenner@fws.gov
Lesli Gray, 972-439-4542, lesli_gray@fws.gov

Service Protects Unique West Texas Plant Under Endangered Species Act

Federal agencies and Mexico working together to conserve last known populations of Guadalupe fescue

With only two populations of Guadalupe fescue remaining in the world, in the Trans-Pecos region of Texas and the state of Coahuila, Mexico, the Service is protecting the perennial grass under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The Service is also designating final critical habitat for the Guadalupe fescue in Big Bend National Park.

The Service proposed the Guadalupe fescue for federal protection in September 2016. The final listing follows a rigorous process using the best available science, and will focus attention on the needs of the species and encourage conservation efforts by other agencies, conservation groups and stakeholders. Native plants such as the fescue are important for their ecological, economic and aesthetic values, and contribute to development of crops that resist disease, insects and drought. At least 25 percent of prescription drugs contain ingredients derived from plant compounds, including medicine to treat cancer, heart disease, juvenile leukemia, and malaria, and to assist in organ transplants. Plants are also used to develop natural pesticides.

“We’re in a race to save the Guadalupe fescue, but by extending ESA protections we hope to generate public attention and support timely collaborations on behalf of this unique plant,” said Amy Lueders, the Service’s Southwest Regional Director. “Successful conservation requires strong partnerships and we greatly appreciate the work and dedication of our partners, the National Park Service and Mexico, to improve the status of Guadalupe fescue both here and in Mexico.”

Guadalupe fescue is a short-lived perennial grass species. It had been known to occur in six locations, but now exists only in the Chisos Mountains within Big Bend National Park and in the Maderas del Carmen Mountains in northern Mexico.

Guadalupe fescue continues to be threatened by the scarcity and small size of its populations, and the isolation of its populations from each other, all of which can negatively impact its reproduction and genetic variation. Also negatively impacting the fescue are reduced frequency of wildfires, livestock grazing (direct predation of plants), invasive species, effects of climate change such as higher temperatures and changes in the amount and seasonal pattern of rainfall, and runoff from trails.

The Service continues to work closely with Big Bend National Park and Guadalupe Mountains National Park on implementation of a Candidate Conservation Agreement to conserve the species. The agreement focuses on monitoring and surveys; seed and germ plasm banking; fire and invasive species

management; trail management; educating staff and visitors; establishing an advisory team of experts; and cooperation with Mexican agencies and researchers to conserve the known Guadalupe fescue populations and identify new ones.

The Service is designating 7,815 acres of critical habitat for the species, entirely within the Big Bend National Park. The designation does not include any private land. Critical habitat designations under the ESA identify geographic areas containing features essential for the conservation of a threatened or endangered species, and which may require special management considerations or protection.

Designation of critical habitat does not affect land ownership, establish a refuge or preserve, and has no impact on private landowners taking actions on their land that do not require federal funding or permits. Federal agencies that undertake, fund or permit activities that may affect critical habitat are required to consult with the Service to ensure such actions do not adversely modify or destroy designated critical habitat.

America's fish, wildlife and plant resources belong to all of us, and ensuring the health of imperiled species is a shared responsibility. The Service is actively engaged with conservation partners and the public in the search for improved and innovative ways to conserve and recover imperiled species. To learn more about the Endangered Species program, go to <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](#).

-FWS-

<http://www.fws.gov/southwest/>