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Landmark Conservation Agreements Keep Dunes Sagebrush Lizard off the Endangered Species List in NM, TX

WASHINGTON – As a result of unprecedented commitments to voluntary conservation agreements now in place in New Mexico and Texas that provide for the long-term conservation of the dunes sagebrush lizard, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has determined that the species does not need to be listed under the Endangered Species Act.

“This is a great example of how states and landowners can take early, landscape-level action to protect wildlife habitat before a species is listed under the Endangered Species Act,” said Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar. “The voluntary conservation efforts of Texas and New Mexico, oil and gas operators, private landowners and other stakeholders show that we don’t have to choose between energy development and the protection of our land and wildlife – we can do both.”

State-led voluntary conservation efforts to protect existing shinnery oak dune habitat and greatly reduce the impact of oil and gas development across the species’ range now cover over 650,000 acres in New Mexico and Texas, totaling 88 percent of the lizard’s habitat. These measures also minimize the anticipated impacts of other threats, such as off-road vehicle traffic, wind and solar development, and increased predation caused by development.

“The states of New Mexico and Texas have worked tirelessly with the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management and scores of landowners and operators in the Permian Basin to conserve and protect habitat that supports the dunes sagebrush lizard and many other species,” said Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe. “These ongoing efforts will play a key role in ensuring the future of the lizard, while allowing responsible oil and gas development to continue.”

The Endangered Species Act requires that listing decisions be based solely on the best available science. A species is listed as endangered when it is threatened with extinction through all or a significant portion of its range.

Since the Fish and Wildlife Service proposed the rule to list the dunes sagebrush lizard in December, 2010, the Service has received and reviewed a wide range of scientific information. New information provided by the BLM and Texas A&M University has enabled the Service to refine mapping of suitable and occupied shinnery oak dune habitat in New Mexico and Texas and identified more known occupied sites for the lizard, especially in Texas.

After a careful analysis of the scientific data and the protections provided by the voluntary conservation efforts, Service biologists determined the lizard is no longer in danger of extinction, nor likely to become endangered in the foreseeable future.

The Service will closely monitor the conservation measures to ensure they are being implemented and effectively address identified threats. The Service can reevaluate whether the dunes sagebrush lizard requires Endangered Species Act protection.

For more information on the conservation agreements in New Mexico and Texas, please visit [here](#).

For more information on the Dunes Sagebrush Lizard and the withdrawal of the proposed rule, please visit [here](#).

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