



News Release

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www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/

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Agencies Announce Preferred Plan for Reestablishing Endangered Sonoran Pronghorn Populations

-Fish and Wildlife Service Proposes Designating New Populations as “Experimental”-

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has drafted an environmental assessment for establishing a second U.S. population of endangered Sonoran pronghorn and identified Kofa National Wildlife Refuge in Yuma County as its preferred reintroduction location. An additional population expansion east of State Route 85 is also being proposed. The Service is proposing to designate any reestablished Sonoran pronghorn populations as an “experimental, nonessential population” – a designation under the Endangered Species Act that allows for greater management flexibility in reintroducing new populations within the species’ historical range. Input into both proposals is being sought through April 5, 2010.

“Establishing additional U.S. populations of Sonoran pronghorns will be a tremendous benefit to recovering one of the most endangered land mammals in North America,” said Benjamin Tuggle, Regional Director of the Service’s Southwest Region. “Conservation biologists, numerous federal land managers, Native American Tribes and Arizona Game and Fish Department have contributed to a decade of far-sighted efforts that have wrestled the Sonoran pronghorn from near eradication in the U.S. - now we’re moving on to promising plans toward recovering the species.”

The Service and its Sonoran pronghorn recovery partners are proposing to establish a Sonoran pronghorn breeding enclosure on Kofa National Wildlife Refuge, moving 11 breeding-age pronghorn to the enclosure next winter, and as early as 2012-13, annually releasing up to 20 offspring from the facility into suitable adjacent habitat. An additional holding pen is being proposed on Barry M. Goldwater Range-East. Offspring reared at the Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge captive-breeding facility would be moved to the Goldwater-East for acclimation prior to release to establish a new population east of State Route 85.

The Service is seeking comments on both the draft environmental assessment and proposed experimental population rule. Both documents are available at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/Library/> or by contacting the Refuge Manager, Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge, 1611 N. Second Ave., Ajo, AZ 85321 (520-387-5359). Written comments can be mailed to the Refuge Manager, emailed to James_Atkinson@fws.gov, posted at <http://www.regulations.gov> (FWS-R2-ES-2009-0077) or faxed to 520-387-5359. Comments must be received no later than April 5, 2010.

On Feb. 23, 2010, a public information session on the environmental assessment will be held from 4:30 - 5:30 p.m., followed by a public hearing on the proposed experimental population designation from 7:00 - 8:30 p.m. Both events will be held at Logan Auditorium, Gila Bend High School, 308 N. Martin Ave., Gila Bend, Ariz. Written and oral comments will be collected at the hearing.

Sonoran pronghorn originally ranged widely throughout the Sonoran Desert in southwestern Arizona and northern Mexico. The Sonoran pronghorn is extremely skittish and very fast. Because it uses distance and speed as protection from predators, it prefers wide open spaces.

Sonoran pronghorn are now confined to an increasingly isolated and fragmented portion of their former range as a result of human settlement and associated development. Today, there are an estimated 68 animals in the U.S. limited to Barry M. Goldwater Range, Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge, Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument and two Mexican populations totaling 400 animals.

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.

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Note to Editors: Photo and map support for this announcement are available by contacting Jeff Humphrey (602-242-0210 x222) or James Atkinson (520-387-4989).