



News Release

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

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Critical Habitat Finalized for Two Arizona Cacti

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has finalized critical habitat for the Fickeisen plains cactus and the acuña cactus, both of which are only found in portions of Arizona. A total of 17,456 acres in six units are designated as critical habitat for Fickeisen plains cactus in portions of Coconino and Mohave counties, and 18,535 acres in six units are being designated for the acuña cactus in portions of Maricopa, Pima, and Pinal counties. Areas designated as critical habitat are primarily federally owned lands administered by the Forest Service, National Park Service and Bureau of Land Management.

The Service initially proposed to designate 49,186 acres as essential to the conservation of the Fickeisen plains cactus and 53,720 acres as essential to the conservation of the acuña cactus.

Following comments and information provided to the Service, 935 acres of proposed acuña cactus critical habitat was exempted on the Barry M. Goldwater Range based on their approved Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan that provides a conservation benefit to the plant. Additionally, 9,554 acres of proposed Fickeisen plains cactus critical habitat on lands belonging the Navajo Nation, and 385 acres of Tohono O'odham Nation lands proposed as acuña cactus critical habitat were excluded from the final designation. These tribes have shown a commitment to conserving the plants on their respective lands, and exclusion of these lands from critical habitat is important in preserving our government-to-government relationships.

More than 33,000 acres of proposed acuña cactus critical habitat were removed from further consideration because they were not essential to the conservation of the plant.

In 2013, we revised the Fickeisen plains cactus proposal to address approximately 2000 acres of proposed Forest Service land that was determined to be unoccupied. Approximately 20,113 acres of essential habitat for the Fickeisen plains cactus were excluded from private and state lands owned or managed by Babbitt Ranches, LLC. The Service determined exclusion of these lands from critical habitat is appropriate based on their philosophy and land ethic which has contributed to the existence of a large, reproducing Fickeisen plains cactus population.

The final economic analysis indicates potential incremental economic impacts for all of the areas originally proposed as acuña cactus critical habitat is \$34,000 over the next 20 years (annualized impact of \$2,200 assuming a 7 percent discount rate); and \$39,000 over the next 20 years (annualized impact of \$2,500) in areas proposed as Fickeisen plains cactus critical habitat. Economic impacts will likely be lower because of the exclusion of 66,915 acres of land from the final designation.

The acuña cactus is a small spherical cactus that occurs in valleys and on small knolls and gravel ridges in the Sonoran Desert scrub of southern Arizona's Maricopa, Pima and Pinal counties and in Sonora, Mexico. Over the last three decades, increased insect attack in combination with water and heat stress have resulted in more than 80 percent mortality with little or no recruitment documented within monitored populations. Most living acuña cactus individuals occur along the U.S. Mexico border and are also threatened by border activities.

The Fickeisen plains cactus is a rounded, quarter-sized cactus that retracts below ground during the winter and summer months. It is restricted to small, isolated populations on the Colorado Plateau in Coconino and Mohave counties. Available monitoring data indicate significant population declines due to poor reproduction and little recruitment. Identified threats are habitat disturbance from livestock grazing, small mammal predation, and small population size – all of which are compounded by water and heat stress from long-term drought and warming winters over the past several decades.

Critical habitat designations have no effect on actions taking place on non-federal lands unless proposed activities involve federal funding or permitting.

The final will publish in the Federal Register on August 18, 2016. Copies of the final rule, maps and other details about the plants will be available online at: <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/> or by contacting the Service's Arizona Ecological Services Office at (602) 242-0210.

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/angered/>.

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. Connect with our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/usfws, follow our tweets at www.twitter.com/usfwshq, watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwshq>.

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