



# News Bulletin

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[www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/](http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/)

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## Service Seeks Additional Input on Proposal to Protect Two Arizona Cacti

*Draft Economic Analysis of Habitat Protection Available*

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is reopening the comment period on its proposal to protect the acuña cactus and Fickeisen plains cactus as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and identify areas important to the species' recovery. The Service is also requesting input on a draft economic analysis that will help inform its critical habitat decision. The Service initially proposed to protect the two cacti on [Oct. 3, 2012](#). Comments will be collected through April 29, 2013.

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. As most living acuña cactus individuals occur along the U.S. Mexico border, border activities are also considered a threat to this species.

The Fickeisen plains cactus is a rounded, quarter-sized cactus that retracts below ground during the winter and summer months. It is a rare cactus that is restricted to small, isolated populations on the Colorado Plateau in Coconino and Mohave counties, Arizona. Long-term and short-term monitoring data from a limited number of sites indicate significant population declines due to poor reproduction and little recruitment. Identified threats include livestock grazing, nonnative invasive species, rodent and rabbit predation, extended drought and climate change.

In areas under federal jurisdiction, the ESA prohibits malicious damage or destruction of threatened or endangered plants. Federal agencies that undertake, fund or permit activities that may affect critical habitat must consult with the Service to ensure such actions are conducted in a manner that does not destroy or adversely modify designated critical habitat. Critical habitat designations have no effect on actions taking place on non-federal lands unless proposed activities involve federal funding or permitting.

Service biologists have identified 53,720 acres in Maricopa, Pima and Pinal counties that may contain desert habitat essential to the conservation of the acuña cactus. For the Fickeisen plains cactus, 49,186 acres in Coconino and Mohave counties were identified as essential.

Areas of proposed critical habitat under the jurisdiction of Department of Defense (Barry M. Goldwater Range), the Navajo Nation and Tohono O'odham Nation are being considered for exemption or exclusion. An area may be excluded from critical habitat if we determine that the benefits of excluding

the area outweigh the benefits of including the area as critical habitat, provided such exclusion will not result in the extinction of the species. The economic analysis will help to inform critical habitat exclusion determinations.

Written comments and information concerning the listing and critical habitat proposals and draft economic analysis of critical habitat can be submitted by one of the following methods:

- Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the instructions for submitting comments on the listing proposal to Docket No. FWS–R2–ES–2012–0061, and submit comments on the critical habitat proposal and associated draft analyses to Docket No. FWS–R2–ES–2013–0025; or
- U.S. mail or hand-delivery: Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS-R2-ES-2012- or FWS–R2–ES–2013–0025; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, MS 2042–PDM; Arlington, VA 22203.

Comments must be received on or before April 29, 2013. The Service will post all comments on <http://www.regulations.gov>. This generally means the agency will post any personal information provided through the process. (Comments only need to be submitted once; comments on both the listing and critical habitat proposals can be submitted under one docket number and we will separate them appropriately.)

More information on the proposed rule, maps, and other details about the plants are available online at: <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/> or by contacting the Service’s Arizona Ecological Service 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](http://www.fws.gov). Connect with our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/usfws](http://www.facebook.com/usfws), follow our tweets at [www.twitter.com/usfwshq](http://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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