



# News Release

**For Release:** December 5, 2019

**Contact:** Alejandro Morales, [alejandro\\_morales@fws.gov](mailto:alejandro_morales@fws.gov), 602-889-5954

## **Fish and Wildlife Service Proposes Listing Two “Sky Island” Plants in Arizona under Endangered Species Act**

*Phoenix, Arizona* – Following a rigorous review of the best available science, the Fish and Wildlife Service is proposing to list the beardless chinchweed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) with critical habitat, and the Bartram’s stonecrop as threatened with a special rule under section 4(d) of the law.

The ESA defines an endangered species as one in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range, and a threatened species as one likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future. Federal protections for these plants will raise greater awareness about the threats to them and inspire diverse partnerships on their behalf.

“The Service looks forward to working with our conservation partners in Arizona to protect and recover these two rare native plants,” said Regional Director Amy Lueders. “Partnerships with state and federal agencies, private landowners and conservation groups are critical to our success.”

The beardless chinchweed and Bartram’s stonecrop are two rare plant species found in isolated mountain ranges known as “sky islands” that rise dramatically above the surrounding desert floor in southern Arizona and northern Mexico. Both species are threatened by the invasion of non-native grasses, altered fire regimes, increasing drought and loss of habitat.

The proposal will publish in the *Federal Register* on December 6, 2019, and public comments will be accepted until February 4, 2020. We encourage the public, academia, federal and state agencies, industry and other stakeholders to review the proposal and provide comments. A final decision to list or withdraw the proposal is typically made within a year after the proposal is received by the agency.

The proposed critical habitat for the beardless chinchweed will help protect areas identified as essential to its conservation, ensuring that federally funded actions do not harm it. Ninety-seven

percent of the 10,604 acres of proposed critical habitat for the chinchweed is on federal lands, with the remaining on National Audubon's Appleton Whittell Research Ranch.

Illegal collection of the Bartram's stonecrop represents a threat to the species, and therefore the mapping of critical habitat would increase this threat. Consequently, the Service is not proposing critical habitat for the plant. The Service assigns protections against take of threatened species through the application of special rules under section 4(d) of the ESA. The 4(d) rule for the stonecrop prohibits unauthorized removal, destruction or transport of the plant.

The beardless chinchweed is a flowering perennial in the sunflower family and occurs in the semi-desert grasslands and oak savannas at elevations of 3,800 to 5,700 feet in southern Arizona and northern Mexico.

Bartram's stonecrop is a flowering succulent plant that occurs in riparian canyons of Madrean woodlands (oaks, junipers, pines) at elevations of 3,500 to 6,700 feet in southern Arizona and northern Mexico.

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 Service's Ecological Services 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/>