

NEWS RELEASE

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Mountain-Prairie Region

134 Union Boulevard

Lakewood, Colorado 80228

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Correction to email address

Fish and Wildlife Service to Conduct Additional Review for the Gunnison's Prairie Dog

An incorrect email address was provided in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's August 28, 2007 news release announcing that the Gunnison's prairie dog will receive additional review under the Endangered Species Act. At that time, the Service also opened a public comment period to allow all interested parties an opportunity to provide information regarding the status of the species.

The correct email address for the public to submit comments or information is: gunnisons_pdog@fws.gov

The Service will also accept comments mailed or hand-delivered to: Gunnison's Prairie Dog Comments, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 764 Horizon Drive, Building B, Grand Junction, CO 81506-3946.

All comments must be received by October 29, 2007.

Additional information about the Gunnison's prairie dog can be found on the Service's web site at:

<http://mountain-prairie.fws.gov/species/mammals/gunnisonprairiedog>

The following information was provided in the August 28, 2007 news release:

The Gunnison's prairie dog is found in Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico and Utah. Range-wide, approximately 70 percent of potential Gunnison's prairie dog habitat occurs on Tribal and private lands. In Arizona and New Mexico, a significant portion of potential habitat occurs on Tribal lands.

The Service is specifically seeking any new information regarding the taxonomic status of the Gunnison's prairie dog; its distribution and population densities; and the effects of sylvatic plague on the species.

The Service is initiating this status review for the Gunnison's prairie dog in response to a July 2, 2007 court-ordered settlement agreement with Forest Guardians.

In 2004, the Service received a petition from Forest Guardians and others to list the Gunnison's prairie dog and designate critical habitat. Under the ESA, the Service is required to review the petition to determine whether it contains substantial information indicating that listing may be warranted – a process known as a 90-day finding. The Service's initial 90-day finding published in 2006 concluded that the petition did not contain substantial biological information indicating that the status of the Gunnison's prairie dog warranted further review. Forest Guardians and others filed a lawsuit challenging that finding. The Service reached a settlement agreement with Forest Guardians to submit to the Federal Register a 12-month status review finding by February 1, 2008.

The Service is now proceeding with the status review, the results of which will indicate whether or not there is evidence to support listing the Gunnison's prairie dog.

The Gunnison's prairie dog (*Cynomys gunnisoni*) is a member of the Sciruidae family which includes squirrels, chipmunks, marmots, and prairie dogs. Adult Gunnison's prairie dogs vary in length from 12 to 15 inches and weigh 23 to 42 ounces, with males averaging slightly larger than females. They are a yellowish buff color with blackish hairs intermixed. The tops of their heads, sides of cheeks, and eyebrows are noticeably darker. The species differs from black-tailed prairie dogs in having a much shorter and lighter colored tail and from other white-tailed species in having grayish-white hairs in the tip of the tail rather than pure white. Gunnison's prairie dogs are found on grasslands and semi-desert and montane shrublands at elevations from 6,000 to 12,000 feet.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 97-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 548 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

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