



United States Department of the Interior

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Arizona Ecological Services Office
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Phoenix, Arizona 85021-4951
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In reply refer to:

AESO/SE

December 12, 2011

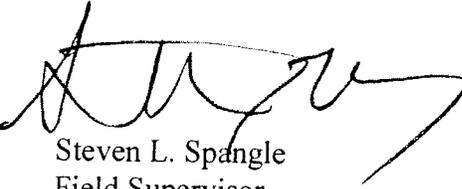
Re: Pre-proposal Notification and Information Request for Acuna Cactus, Fickeisen Plains Cactus, Gierisch Mallow, and Lemmon Fleabane - Four Candidate Plant Species of Arizona

Dear Interested Parties and Agencies:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is responsible for identifying those species that are in need of protection under the Endangered Species Act (Act) of 1973 as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531-1544 et seq.). This letter is a notification that the Service is reviewing information on these candidate species to determine whether *Echinomastus erectocentrus* var. *acunensis* (Acuna cactus), *Pediocactus peeblesianus* var. *fickeiseniae* (Fickeisen plains cactus), *Sphaeralcea gierischii* (Gierisch mallow), and *Erigeron lemmonii* (Lemmon fleabane) need protection afforded by the Act. This information will be considered in our deliberations on whether we will be preparing a proposed rule to list these species as threatened or endangered.

If we determine that listing under the Act is appropriate, a request for formal comments would be made at that time. If you have any specific information regarding any of these species, including threats, planned activities that may affect them, or additional status or distributional information, please provide it to us by January 7, 2012. Information submitted after this date will be considered to the extent we can in light of our commitment to resolve the status of these species in 2012. A short summary of each species is enclosed and additional information is available at: <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/>. Please feel free to distribute this notification to other interested parties. If we can be of assistance, please contact Julie Crawford at (520) 670-6150 (x228) or Jean Calhoun (x223).

Sincerely



Steven L. Spangle
Field Supervisor

Enclosure

cc: Regional Director, Fish and Wildlife Service, Albuquerque, NM (w/attachment)
(Attn: ARD, Sarah Quamme)

A Short Summary of Each Species

Echinomastus erectocentrus var. *acunensis* is a small, spherical, solitary-stemmed plant of the cactus family. This cactus occurs in disjunct populations across southern Arizona and Mexico on well-drained gravel ridges and knolls on granite derived soils. It grows in the Arizona Upland subdivision of the Sonoran Desert scrub plant association at 365 to 850 meters (1,198 to 2,789 feet) in elevation. This candidate species is part of the Multi-District Litigation Settlement Agreement; it is protected by the Arizona Native Plant Law as a highly safeguarded protected native plant and by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.

Erigeron lemmonii is a perennial herbaceous plant of the sunflower family. The plant grows in dense clumps in crevices and on ledges of vertical cliffs at 1,920 to 2,225 meters (6,300 to 7,300 feet) in elevation. The only verified location of the plant is on the Fort Huachuca Military Reservation of southern Arizona; observations from other sites on the Coronado National Forest have not been verified. This candidate species is part of the Multi-District Litigation Settlement Agreement; it is protected by the Arizona Native Plant Law as a highly safeguarded protected native plant.

Pediocactus peeblesianus var. *fickeiseniae* is a small succulent globose plant of the cactus family. This northern Arizona endemic occurs in widely scattered populations on gravelly Kaibab limestone derived soils. It grows on canyon margins and in Navajoan desert or grasslands plant communities at 1,310 to 1,660 meters (4,300 to 5,450 feet) in elevation. This candidate species is part of the Multi-District Litigation Settlement Agreement; it is a Forest Service sensitive species and is protected by the Arizona Native Plant Law as a highly safeguarded protected native plant and by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. The plant is also considered Category 3 on the Navajo Nation's list of threatened, endangered, and sensitive species, which affords it further protection.

Sphaeralcea gierischii is a perennial herbaceous plant of the mallow family. This species is known from one population in southwestern Utah and eight populations in northwestern Arizona. It is limited to gypsum soils and is most often found on north-facing slopes of gypsum outcrops in the Mohave desert scrub plant community at 828 to 1,300 meters (2,715 to 4,262 feet) in elevation. This candidate species is part of the Multi-District Litigation Settlement Agreement; it is not protected by the Arizona Native Plant Law.