



News Release

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Arizona Ecological Services Field Office

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

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Arizona-Utah Plant Receives Endangered Species Act Protection

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has determined that the Gierisch mallow, a desert plant, will be protected as an endangered species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and has identified areas important to the species' recovery. The Service published its final rule in the Federal Register today.

Gierisch mallow, found primarily on federal land in Utah and Arizona, is a perennial, orange-flowered plant that grows up to 3.4 feet tall. Eighteen known populations of the plant – 17 on Bureau of Land Management and one on Arizona State Land Department administered land – are found in northern Mohave County, Arizona and southern Washington County, Utah.

Primary threats to the mallow include gypsum mining, unauthorized off-road vehicle use and other recreational activities. In areas under federal jurisdiction, the ESA prohibits malicious damage or destruction of threatened or endangered plants.

A total of 12,822 acres presently occupied by Gierisch mallow has been designated as critical habitat. These areas provide the biological soil crusts within gypsum soils that are essential to the mallow. Critical habitat is a term in the ESA that identifies geographic areas containing features essential for the conservation of a threatened or endangered species. 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 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.

An economic analysis of the effects of critical habitat designation projects \$3,300 in annual costs – primarily from Federal administrative efforts that would be in addition to basic ESA consultation costs. 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. None of the initially proposed areas were excluded from the final designation. The economic analysis and environmental assessment that helped inform that determination will be available shortly.

The Service initially proposed to protect the Gierisch mallow and sought public comment on [Aug. 17, 2012](#), and again sought public input in March 2013. All comments received are posted at <http://www.regulations.gov> and are addressed in today's final listing and critical habitat rules.

The final rules, maps, and other details about the plant 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.

Native plants are important for their ecological, economic, and aesthetic values. Plants play an important role in development of crops that resist disease, insects, and drought. Plants can also be used to develop natural pesticides.

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>.

<http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/>

Editor's Note: Photos of the Gierisch mallow are available by contacting Jeff Humphrey at 602-242-0210 x222 or on the Internet at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/Plants.htm>.

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