



News Release

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Service Seeks Comments on Revised Jaguar Critical Habitat Proposal, Draft Economic Analysis and Draft Environmental Assessment

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is reopening the comment period for its proposed designation of critical habitat for the jaguar (*Panthera onca*) under the Endangered Species Act. Additionally, the Service is announcing revisions to the proposal and the availability of a draft economic analysis and draft environmental assessment of the proposed designation.

In [August 2012](#), the Service proposed to designate 838,232 acres in southeastern Arizona and southwestern New Mexico as critical habitat for the jaguar. That proposal was informed by information and modeling conducted by a Service-assembled, bi-national, scientific team's Jaguar Recovery Outline.

This spring, the team refined its information and modeling to more accurately reflect habitat essential to jaguars in northwestern Mexico – the population believed to be the source of male jaguars that wander or disperse into Arizona and New Mexico. The Service has applied that information in a current, slightly revised, 858,137-acre critical habitat proposal within the U.S. The revision reflects jaguar use of a wider range of vegetated areas and eliminates high elevations not

utilized by jaguars. The Act calls for the use of the best available scientific and commercial information in critical habitat designations.

Critical habitat is a term in the Act that identifies geographic areas containing features essential for the conservation of a threatened or endangered species, and which may require special management considerations or protection. Federal agencies that undertake, fund or permit activities that may affect critical habitat are required to consult with the Service to ensure such actions do not adversely modify or destroy designated critical habitat. Designation of critical habitat does not affect land ownership, or establish a refuge or preserve, and has no impact on private landowners taking actions on their land that do not require federal funding or permits.

When specifying an area as critical habitat, the Act requires the Service to consider economic impacts and other relevant impacts of the designation. If the benefits of excluding an area outweigh the benefits of designating it, the Secretary may exclude an area from critical habitat, unless the exclusions would result in the extinction of the species.

The draft economic analysis describes the economic impacts of all potential conservation efforts for the jaguar over the next 20 years. Some of these costs would likely be incurred regardless of whether the Service designates critical habitat. The draft economic analysis quantifies economic impacts of jaguar conservation efforts associated with: (1) Federal land management; (2) border protection activities; (3) mining; (4) transportation activities; (5) development; (6) military activities; (7) livestock grazing and other activities; and (8) Tohono O'odham Nation activities.

The purpose of the now-available draft environmental assessment is to identify and disclose the environmental consequences resulting from the proposed action of designating critical habitat for the jaguar.

With publication of this revised proposal in the Federal Register on July 1, 2013, we are reopening the comment period to allow interested parties to comment simultaneously on the revised proposed rule, the associated draft economic analysis and draft environmental assessment. Comments previously submitted on the critical habitat proposal need not be resubmitted, as they will be fully considered in preparation of the final rule. Comments must be received or postmarked on or before August 9, 2013, and can be submitted by one of the following methods:

- Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the instructions for submitting comments on the critical habitat proposal and associated draft analyses to Docket No. FWS–R2–ES–2012–0042; or
- U.S. mail or hand-delivery: Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS–R2–ES–2012–0042; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, MS 2042–PDM; Arlington, VA 22203.

On July 30, 2013, the Service will hold a public information meeting from 3:30-5:00 p.m. followed by a public hearing for recording comments from 6:30-8:30 p.m. The meeting and hearing will be held at Buena High School Performing Arts Center, 5225 Buena School Blvd., Sierra Vista, Arizona 85615. Requests for special accommodations can be made by contacting the Arizona Ecological Services Office, 2321 W. Royal Palm Rd., Ste 103, Phoenix AZ 85021 (602-242-0210).

More information on the proposed rule, maps, supporting analyses, and other details about the jaguar is available online at: <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/Jaguar.htm>.

The health of threatened and endangered species is strongly linked to our own well-being. Millions of Americans depend on habitat that sustains these species – for clean air and water, recreational opportunities and for their livelihoods. By taking action to protect imperiled native fish, wildlife and plants, we can ensure a healthy future for our community.

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>.