



News Release

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New Mexico Lands Removed from Jaguar Critical Habitat Designation

To comply with a court ruling, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has removed New Mexico lands from the critical habitat designation for jaguars. The action will remove approximately 110,438 acres of critical habitat from the original 764,207-acre designation made in 2014 that also included Arizona. The critical habitat designation in Arizona remains unchanged.

In March 2020, the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals concluded that the Service did not comply with its obligation to designate unoccupied [critical habitat](#) “only when a designation limited to its present range would be inadequate to ensure the conservation of the species.”

The ruling was in response to a lawsuit filed by the New Mexico Farm and Livestock Bureau, New Mexico Cattle Growers’ Association, and New Mexico Federal Lands Council. The New Mexico District Court implemented the appellate court’s decision in January 2021.

More than 99% of the jaguar’s range is found in Central and South America, and the few male jaguars in the U.S. have dispersed from core populations in Mexico. Jaguar breeding in the U.S. has not been documented in more than 50 years. The primary threats to the jaguar across its range are habitat loss and fragmentation; killing for trophies and illegal trade in body parts; proactive or retaliatory killing associated with livestock depredations; and competition for wild meat with human hunters.

The Service has established strong working relationships with state and local partners, conservation groups and the Mexican government in support of jaguar recovery. The binational recovery team has not prescribed jaguar reintroductions in the U.S. but calls for focusing efforts on sustaining potential habitat.

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.

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Graphic: This map illustrates the five units of jaguar critical habitat in the U.S. While about half of Unit 5 is located in New Mexico and is now removed from the designation, the vast majority of the critical habitat designation (which includes units 1 through 4) remains in place in southeastern Arizona. Credit: USFWS

