



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Petition to Expand Mt. Graham Red Squirrel Critical Habitat to be Considered

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has determined that a petition to revise the Mount Graham red squirrel's critical habitat will be considered when the Service completes the squirrel's species status assessment (SSA) and recovery plan in 2022.

Service biologists are currently working on an SSA with federal, state, Tribal and academic partners to update the 2011 Draft Recovery Plan for the squirrel and its status under the Endangered Species Act as needed. During the SSA and recovery planning processes, FWS biologists will refine habitat needs and model Mount Graham red squirrel habitat into the future in order to better inform a revised critical habitat.

In a December 2017 petition, Center for Biological Diversity requested an emergency revision to the Mount. Graham red squirrel critical habitat designation after the 2017 Frye Fire devastated its population, leaving under 40 individuals in the wild. The 2020 annual survey of the Mount Graham red squirrel showed a notable increase to a minimum estimate of 109 squirrels.

The Mount Graham red squirrel is an endangered subspecies of the red squirrels common across North America. The squirrel is native only to the Pinaleno Mountains of Arizona. It is smaller than most red squirrels, and also lacks the white-fringed tail that's common for red squirrels. They eat mixed seeds, conifer cones and dry fungi.

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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