



# News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Service Completes Initial Reviews on Endangered Species Act Petition for Mount Graham Red Squirrel**

PHOENIX, Arizona -- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has completed initial review of an Endangered Species Act (ESA) petition for the Mount Graham red squirrel. The Service concluded that the petition requesting critical habitat designation for the endangered Mount Graham red squirrel presents substantial information indicating that revising critical habitat for this species may be warranted.

The Mount Graham red squirrel is a small, grayish-brown arboreal subspecies weighing a mere 8 ounces and measuring about 8 inches in length, with a 6-inch long fluffy tail. Its historical and current range is limited to the Pinaleño Mountains in Graham County, Arizona, where it currently occurs in high-elevations down to approximately 7,500 feet. The squirrel was originally listed as endangered in 1987 due to a reduction in range and habitat from forest fires, road construction and other development. In 1990, the Service published a final rule designating critical habitat in three units of dense stands of mature spruce-fir forest, for a total of about 2,000 acres.

On December 14, 2017, the Service received a petition from the Center for Biological Diversity requesting that critical habitat for the Mount Graham red squirrel be revised under the Act. Based on our review of the petition and sources cited in the petition, we find that the petition presents substantial scientific or commercial information indicating that revising critical habitat for the Mount Graham red squirrel may be warranted. The Service's conclusion is based primarily on new information indicating significant changes to the forest currently designated as critical habitat and regarding the squirrel's use of habitat previously considered to be of lesser importance.

The ESA allows citizens to petition the Service to add species to the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants, remove species from the list, and to reclassify species already on the list.

The Federal Register docket number and link for the substantial petition finding are:

<b>Species</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>Docket Number</b>	<b>Docket link</b>
Mount Graham red squirrel	AZ	FWS-R2-ES-2019-0084	<a href="https://www.regulations.gov/docket?D=FWS-R2-ES-2019-0084">https://www.regulations.gov/docket?D=FWS-R2-ES-2019-0084</a>

The notice for the above findings will be available in the *Federal Register* Reading Room on September 6, 2019 at <https://www.federalregister.gov/public-inspection> on the 2019 Notices link under Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants.

For more information on the ESA listing process, including 90-day findings and status reviews, please go to [www.fws.gov/endangered/esa-library/pdf/listing.pdf](http://www.fws.gov/endangered/esa-library/pdf/listing.pdf).

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