



# News Release

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Arizona Ecological Services Field Office <http://arizonaes.fws.gov>

**For Release:** September 14, 2004

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## RECOVERY PLAN FOR ENDANGERED GRAND CANYON PLANT DRAFTED U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE SEEKS INPUT

In the Grand Canyon's court of endangered species – the California condor may be the jester, looping and playing on the wind; and the ancient humpback chub may be the brooding sage in the deep green water of the Colorado River; but the endangered Sentry milk-vetch, clutching to a unique loose layer of limestone, would be the steadfast guardian of the Canyon Rim.

A team of northern Arizona scientists and land managers have drafted a plan for the recovery of the sentry milk-vetch, for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service). The team of experts from The Arboretum at Flagstaff, National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and Northern Arizona University, is now seeking public and peer review of the plan before the Service accepts and adopts a final recovery strategy. "The final recovery plan will not be a regulatory, binding document" said Service Regional Director Dale Hall. "Rather, it will be a prescription of tasks and benchmarks determined by scientists and local interests that will guide our efforts and measure our progress in restoring this unique native plant."

The one-inch plants grow in mats up to 10 inches wide utilizing a thick taproot to anchor it in arid, shallow soils or small rock fissures in the narrow Kaibab limestone layer exposed at the lip of the Grand Canyon.

The sentry milk-vetch was described as "common" when first discovered in 1903 at a location where the historic El Tovar lodge was built on the South Rim. Almost a century of trampling under the feet of canyon visitors pushed it to the edge of extinction. In 1990, the National Park Service fenced off the only known remaining population – fewer than 300 plants in an area less than an acre at Maricopa Point. Later that year, the sentry milk-vetch was added to the federal list of endangered species. Since then, two plants were discovered near Grandview Point on the South Rim and a 1000-plant population was found on the distant North Rim. Researchers collected flowers and fruit in 2003 in order to verify the species identity of another suspected South Rim population.

In addition to the continued surveying for additional plant populations, the recovery team proposes to protect all known populations from threats and manage and maintain them to their maximum potential, establish new wild populations as necessary, and establish a botanical garden/greenhouse population program. The team proposes that once four viable populations are secured in the wild (each with at least 1000 individuals), the sentry milk-vetch can be downlisted from endangered to threatened status. Once eight viable populations have been established, the plant will be eligible for removal from the Federal list.

The Service seeks public review and comments on the draft recovery plan through [date]. The draft recovery plan is available on the Internet at <http://arizonaes.fws.gov/>. Requests for the draft plan and comments should be submitted to Steve Spangle, Field Supervisor, Arizona Ecological Services Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2321 West Royal Palm Road, Suite 103, Phoenix, Arizona 85021, by mail, fax (602-242-2513).

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 542 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 70 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies. Visit the Service's website at <http://www.fws.gov> website.

NOTE TO EDITORS: Sentry milk-vetch photos, information sheets and the complete draft plan are available at <http://arizonaes.fws.gov/> or by calling the contacts listed on page one.

<<http://arizonaes.fws.gov/>>

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