



News Release

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SERVICE ANNOUNCES AVAILABILITY OF DRAFT ECONOMIC ANALYSIS FOR TWO EAST TEXAS PLANTS

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) today released an analysis that estimates the cost related to the proposed critical habitat for the Texas golden gladeceess and the Neches River rose-mallow over the next 20 years. In addition, the Service is announcing the reopening of the comment period for 30 days to allow all interested parties the opportunity to comment on the draft economic analysis, the amended determinations sections and the proposed rules.

On September 11, 2012, the Service proposed to list the Texas golden gladeceess as endangered and the Neches River rose-mallow as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. The Service also proposed to designate approximately 1,353 acres as critical habitat for the Texas golden gladeceess and approximately 167 acres as critical habitat for the Neches River rose-mallow in East Texas.

The Service will hold a public informational meeting followed by a public hearing on Wednesday, May 1, 2013, in the Kennedy Auditorium at Stephen F. Austin State University, 1906 Alumni Drive S., Nacogdoches, Texas. The informational meeting will be held from 5:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m. followed by a break and the public hearing will be held from 7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

Critical habitat is a term in the Endangered Species 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. Designation of critical habitat does not affect land ownership, 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 Endangered Species Act requires the Service to consider economic 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 that would jeopardize the existence of a threatened or endangered species.

The draft economic analysis quantifies economic impacts of the two East Texas plants conservation efforts associated with the following categories of activity if these activities are federally assisted or carried out: routine transportation projects, utility-related activities and installation of interstate natural gas pipelines; land management; and water management. Total present value impacts anticipated to result from the critical habitat designation of all units for the gladeceess are approximately \$478,000 and approximately \$29,000 for the rose-mallow over 20 years.

The Texas golden gladeceess is a winter annual plant that is known to occur naturally in San Augustine and Sabine Counties in East Texas. There are only eight documented Texas golden gladeceess occurrences, including four historic sites where the plants have been eliminated. The Texas golden gladeceess is a habitat specialist, occurring only on isolated outcrops of the Weches Geologic Formation (a specific type of soil). Populations are found on private land and, in two instances, extend onto State highway right-of-ways. The species is threatened by glauconite quarrying activities; oil and gas development, including, pipeline construction; competition from native and nonnative species; herbicide spraying; and conversion of pastures or forest with native prairie patches to pine plantations.

The Neches River rose-mallow is a nonwoody perennial plant that is known to occur naturally in Cherokee, Harrison, Houston and Trinity Counties in East Texas. The species has also been introduced in Nacogdoches and Houston Counties. Populations are located on private, State and Federal lands (Davy Crockett National Forest). This species is found in wetlands and is threatened by activities that would alter the hydrology of wetland areas; competition from native and nonnative species; drought; and effects of herbicide spraying.

Comments on the proposed listing, critical habitat and/or the draft economic analysis will be accepted until May 16, 2013, and may be submitted by one of the following methods:

(1) *Electronically*: Go to the Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>. Submit comments on the listing proposal to Docket No. FWS–R2–ES–2012–0064, and submit comments on the critical habitat proposal and associated draft economic analysis to Docket No. FWS–R2–ES–2013–0027.

(2) *By hard copy*: Submit comment on the listing proposal by U.S. mail or hand-delivery to: Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS–R2–ES–2012–0064; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, MS 2042–PDM; Arlington, VA 22203. Submit comments on the critical habitat proposal and draft economic analysis by U.S. mail or hand-delivery to: Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS–R2–ES–2013–0027; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, MS 2042–PDM; Arlington, VA 22203.

Comments previously submitted need not be resubmitted, as they will be fully considered in preparation of the final rule.

For additional information, contact Dawn Whitehead, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Corpus Christi Ecological Services Field Office, 6300 Ocean Drive, USFWS Unit 5837, Corpus Christi, Texas, 78412–5837, by telephone 361–994–9005 or by fax 361–994–8262. Persons who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 800–877–8339.

The Endangered Species Act prohibits malicious damage or destruction of threatened or endangered plant in any area under Federal jurisdiction, and the removal, cutting, digging up, or damaging or destroying of any such species on any other area in knowing violation of any State law or regulation, or in the course of any violation of a State criminal trespass law. Listing also focuses attention on the needs of the species, encouraging conservation efforts by other agencies (Federal, State and local), conservation groups, and other organizations and individuals.

Native plants are important for their ecological, economic, and aesthetic values. Plants play an important role in development of crops that resist disease, insects, and drought. At least 25 percent

of prescription drugs contain ingredients derived from plant compounds, including medicine to treat cancer, heart disease, juvenile leukemia, and malaria, and to assist in organ transplants. Plants are also used to develop natural pesticides.

America's fish, wildlife and plant resources belong to all of us, and ensuring the health of imperiled species is a shared responsibility. The Service is actively engaged with conservation partners and the public in the search for improved and innovative ways to conserve and recover imperiled species. To learn more about the Endangered Species program, go to <http://www.fws.gov/angered/>.

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>.

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