

News Release

October 8, 2014

Contacts: Ken Warren, [ken\\_warren@fws.gov](mailto:ken_warren@fws.gov), 772-562-3909, ext. 323  
Tom MacKenzie, [tom\\_mackenzie@fws.gov](mailto:tom_mackenzie@fws.gov), 404-679-7291

## **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Proposes to List Florida Bristle Fern**

VERO BEACH, Fla. -- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposes to list the Florida bristle fern as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The public is invited to comment on this proposal for the next 60 days through December 8, 2014.

Only found in Miami-Dade and Sumter Counties, the Florida bristle fern is a small, mat-forming fern with bristle-like outgrowths at its tips. The fern doesn't have roots, and it superficially resembles mosses and liverworts. Currently, there are only two known groupings of populations of this plant. In Miami-Dade County, the fern is found in limestone solution holes on the Miami Rock Ridge. In Sumter County, the fern lives on limestone boulders under thick forest cover in moderately moist hammocks. Only 12 subpopulations of the fern are known to remain – 10 in Miami-Dade County and two in Sumter County.

The Florida bristle fern has been a candidate for federal listing as endangered since November 2009. An endangered plant is one that is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range. A rule proposing a critical habitat designation is pending.

Habitat modification and destruction are the main threats to this fern. The changes to its habitat are mainly caused by urban development, agricultural conversion, regional drainage, and canal installation.

The Service will decide whether to extend ESA protection for the Florida bristle fern after evaluating all available scientific information. The Service is seeking information concerning threats to the plant and its habitat. Information is also needed on the plant's biology, range, and population trends. If the Florida bristle fern is listed under the ESA, the Service will work cooperatively with partners to conserve its habitat. In addition, federal agencies would need to ensure activities they authorize, fund, or carry out are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of this plant.

The proposed listing of the Florida bristle fern is part of the Service's efforts to implement a court-approved work plan under a Multi-District Listing Agreement aimed at addressing a series of lawsuits concerning the agency's ESA listing program. The intent of the agreement is to significantly reduce a litigation-driven workload. For more information, please see <http://www.fws.gov/southeast/candidateconservation/>

The Service will accept comments concerning the proposed listing of the Florida bristle fern that are received or postmarked on or before December 8, 2014. To submit comments electronically, please go to the Federal eRulemaking Portal <http://www.regulations.gov>. In the Search box,

enter FWS–R4–ES–2014–0044, which is the docket number for this rulemaking. Then, in the Search panel on the left side of the screen, under the Document Type heading, click on the Proposed Rules link to locate this document. You may submit a comment by clicking on “Comment Now!” If you prefer, you can mail or hand-deliver comments to: Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS–R4–ES–2014–0044, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Headquarters, MS: BPHC, 5275 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, VA 22041-3803. Request for a public hearing must be made in writing by November 24, 2014, to the Falls Church, VA, address.

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. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit [www.fws.gov/southeast](http://www.fws.gov/southeast). Connect with us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/usfwssoutheast](http://www.facebook.com/usfwssoutheast), follow our tweets at [www.twitter.com/usfwssoutheast](http://www.twitter.com/usfwssoutheast), watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws>, and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwssoutheast>.