

DoD Partners to Address 251 Candidate Species

Overview

The U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia approved a settlement on September 10, 2011, that requires the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to decide whether to extend federal protection to 757 plant and animal species. This Multi-District Litigation (MDL) settlement with the Center for Biological Diversity and Wild Earth Guardians established a six-year schedule for final listing decisions on 251 species on the candidate list, and developing initial findings on the other 506 species.

Potential Impact to DoD

A preliminary DoD survey identified 60 of the 251 species as being on or adjacent to DoD lands – 25 Army, 35 Navy, 5 Marine Corps, and 6 Air Force.¹ The Military Services tentatively identified nine species as having the greatest potential to significantly impact military actions. Eight species, including the yellow-billed cuckoo the streaked horned lark, and the greater sage grouse, are of concern to more than one Military Service.

Species of Greatest Potential Concern

- Taylor's checkerspot butterfly (JB Lewis-McChord)
- Greater sage grouse (Mt. Home AFB and associated ranges; Nellis AFR)
- Yellow-billed cuckoo (locations for all Military Services in AZ, ID, NV, NM, UT)
- Red knot (Navy/Marine Corps East coast installations from MD to FL, including MCB Lejeune and MCAS Cherry Point)
- Streaked horned lark (Army and Navy locations in WA and OR)
- Washington ground squirrel (Army and Navy locations in WA and OR)
- Brand's phacelia (Navy and Marine Corps locations in southern CA)
- Vandenberg monkeyflower (Vandenberg AFB)
- Gunnison's prairie dog (Air Force Academy)

Actions Underway

The Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), USFWS, and Military Departments have each identified steps to increase coordination and cooperation, and reduce the potential need to list these species.

Office of the Secretary of Defense

OSD representatives have met with USFWS to discuss their priorities and timelines, and are engaging the Military Departments to ensure mission impacts are avoided or minimized. Specific OSD activities include:

- Continuing to engage USFWS at the Endangered Species Roundtable,
- Meeting with leadership to investigate developing a streamlined Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan (INRMP) review process,
- Working with the Military Departments to standardize how they identify key interest species and potential mission impacts,
- Developing an updated consolidated key species list, and
- Establishing policies and procedures to ensure Military Departments are actively managing the candidate species that pose the greatest risk to mission, including by having up-to-date INRMPs and reporting activities and issues at the FY2012 Environmental Management Reviews.

¹ Some species occur on lands managed by more than one Military Service.

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Military Departments

The Military Departments are working with OSD leadership and with installations personnel to ensure they are prepared for possible future actions. Specific activities include:

- Continuing to evaluate possible mission impacts of listing any of the 251 species,
- Ensuring that natural resources managers and mission trainers/testers coordinate on identifying key issues,
- Determining if installations have complete baseline information on affected species,
- Ensuring that installations provide key species/habitat information to USFWS field and regional offices, and
- Screening the complementary list of 506 species to determine which species occur on or near DoD lands.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The USFWS continues to communicate and collaborate with OSD on its priority species and issues. Species activities include:

- Providing information about factors used in making listing decisions,²
- Incorporating DoD species/habitat information (e.g., monitoring, scientific studies) in their decision-making processes,
- Providing a template for installations to input data on potentially affected species,
- Identifying POCs for all key DoD species of interest,
- Developing a timeline for listing actions/update, as appropriate,
- Emphasizing the use of Candidate Conservation Agreements (CCAs) and Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances (CCAAs), where appropriate, and
- Deferring action on the list of 506 species.

Steps Forward

OSD, the Military Departments, and the USFWS all recognize the significant issues associated with the possible listing of 251 plant and animal species. Together, the partners are working to develop a plan that will minimize impacts to mission activities while maximizing benefits to the affected species.

² The five determination criteria are described in Section 4(a)(1) of the Endangered Species Act. The USFWS developed a fact sheet describing the five factors. It was prepared specifically and solely for DoD use, and should not be shared beyond DoD. It may be accessed at: https://www.denix.osd.mil/denix_secure/loader.cfm?csModule=security/getfile&pageid=24070.