



Endangered Species Act Alert 2001-3

RE: USFWS Lists Pygmy Rabbit as Endangered
DATE: November 30, 2001

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today granted immediate endangered species status to the Columbia Basin pygmy rabbit under the emergency rule provisions of the Endangered Species Act.

This population of the pygmy rabbit, the smallest rabbit in North America, consists of fewer than 50 individuals in Douglas County, Washington.

USFWS biologists have determined that the Columbia Basin pygmy rabbit is imminently threatened with extinction because of recent significant population declines, as well as ongoing disturbances to its sagebrush habitat, disease, predation, and loss of genetic diversity.

An emergency listing under the Endangered Species Act provides immediate federal protection for 240 days while the federal agency simultaneously publishes a proposed rule under normal procedures to list the population as endangered. The public is invited to comment on the proposed rule and submit scientific information about the species' status.

Currently, the species only occurs on state land. However, the Foster Creek Conservation District is developing a Habitat Conservation Plan for private agricultural interests in Douglas County. The plan will address ranching, farming, and orchard activities, and will likely also include conservation measures for Columbia Basin pygmy rabbits on private lands.

Link information:

<http://news.fws.gov/newsreleases/default.cfm?region=1>

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If you have questions or comments about this ESA Alert, please contact Megan Callahan Grant (mcallahan@parametrix.com), ESA Program Policy Analyst, who can direct them to the appropriate specialist.