



STATUS OF SPECIES OF CONCERN

By Mary Jennings

(The following are outline notes from Ms. Jennings' presentation.)

Listings under the Endangered Species Act (ESA)

- Endangered – in danger of extinction throughout all, or a significant portion, of its range.
- Threatened – likely to become endangered in the foreseeable future.

Proposed for listing under ESA: We have actually prepared the proposal to list the species, but have not yet finalized the proposal. Federal agencies must consult with US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFSW), if their activities will jeopardize the continued survival and recovery of the species.

Candidates for listing under ESA: Those species that we believe meet the definition of threatened or endangered, but we have not yet proposed them for listing. Through the Candidate Notice of Review (CNOR) in the United States Federal Register (FR) we continue to seek information about their status.

Since there are so many candidates and it takes a lot of time to list a species, we developed a priority system designed to direct our efforts toward the plant and animal species in greatest need. The listing priority number is related to monotypic genus, species, subspecies, variety or vertebrate population. The lower the number, the higher the priority.

Species of Concern

- Possible future candidates for ESA protection.
- Species of highest priority for conservation.
- Direct survey and research efforts.
- Prioritize funding.

USFWS Category 2 Candidate List

- Listing under ESA may be warranted.
- Additional information needed.
- Discontinued Category 2 list in 1996.
- Other tools for identifying potential candidates.
- Natural Heritage Program lists, state lists, Partners in Flight list, and others.

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Black-footed Ferret (Mustela nigripes)

- Nocturnal, nearly solitary carnivore.
- Nearly obligate associate of prairie dog (*Cynomys* spp.).
- First listed under the Endangered Species Preservation Act in 1966 as endangered.
- Multiple brushes with extinction.

Reintroductions have occurred in Wyoming, Montana, South Dakota, Arizona, Utah/Colorado, and Mexico. One site in South Dakota is considered self-supporting.

The 1988 Plan called for 200 breeding adults in a captive program, a total of 1500 breeding adults in 10 or more different populations, and wide distribution through the historic range. The 1988 recovery plan is being revised.

Ute Ladies'-Tresses (Spiranthes diluvialis)

- Perennial orchid.
- Stems 8 to 20 inches tall.
- Blooms late July through August.
- Distribution is broad, but patchy occurrences.
- Occurs in Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nebraska, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.
- Listed as threatened under ESA in 1992.
- Petitioned to delist in May 1996.
- Draft recovery plan never finalized.

The USFWS is trying to finalize the recovery plan and is responding to the petition.

Black-tailed Prairie Dog (Cynomys ludovicianus)

- Petitioned for listing in 1998.
- USFWS candidate since February 4, 2000.
- Listing priority of 8 in the 2002 CNOR.
- Significant new information to consider.

We have not updated our finding with regard to black-tailed prairie dogs in the latest CNOR. In the 2002 CNOR, listing was warranted, but precluded by higher priorities and assigned a listing priority number of 8. Since then, we have received significant new information about the species from the National Wildlife Federation, Forest Guardians, and the states of Arizona, Colorado, Kansas, Montana, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, and Wyoming. The USFWS is considering this information and intends to publish a finding for this species in the FR. However, it was erroneously left on the list of species in the CNOR with the wrong listing priority number (11 instead of 8), so we will publish a correction. The following factors will be considered when making the next finding:

- Absent from significant portion of range.
- Plague remains threat.
- Some estimates of acreage larger than original.
- Some other threats may be less severe.

Mountain Plover (Charadrius montanus)

- Small bird, similar to killdeer.
- Associated with short-grass prairie, often prairie dog colonies.
- Breeding range reduced.
- Proposed for listing as threatened under ESA in 1999.

Withdrew proposal to list in September 2003, because threats were determined not to be as significant as originally thought and declines in local populations were not supported by statewide estimates. Historic conversion to agriculture is not continuing, and some birds are nesting in agricultural fields; examples of habitat problems associated with grazing seem localized and are not reflective of conditions across the range; prairie dog declines may not be as significant as originally

thought; and much of the energy development has not been detrimental to plovers. Over utilization is not a problem. Areas where nest predation is occurring don't seem to have nesting success that is significantly adversely affected. Federal, state, and county agencies and governments have taken significant proactive steps and are showing progress in the conservation of plovers. Pesticide issues do not seem to be of a magnitude or immediacy that warrants listing. May come back: the USFWS has received very large requests for information from our files under Freedom of Information Act. This activity often precedes a notice of intent to sue.

Greater Sage Grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*)

- Long lived.
- Low reproductive rates.
- Large expanses of mature sagebrush.
- Needs understory of tall grasses and abundance and diversity of forbs.
- High site fidelity.
- Estimated decline of 80 to 90% from pre-settlement numbers.
- Decline of 30% since 1985.
- Historic number: > 1,000,000.
- Current numbers: unknown – 1998 estimate of 157,000.
- Multiple petitions for listing received.
- April 21, 2004, issued 90-day finding on three petitions.
- Found substantial information exists indicating listing may be warranted.
- Requesting new information by June 21, 2004.
- Twelve-month finding expected early 2005.

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