

Service to Consider Delisting of Valley Elderberry Longhorn Beetle

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Sacramento - The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is requesting more scientific and biological information from the public and species experts about the valley elderberry longhorn beetle to determine whether the beetle, currently a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), should be proposed for delisting.

Today's announcement, known as a 90-day finding, will open a 60-day public comment period. The Service will accept comments from the public until October 18, 2011. A copy of the finding is available at www.fws.gov/sacramento

The finding is the result of a petition submitted by the Pacific Legal Foundation in September 2010, seeking to remove the beetle, (*Desmocerus californicus dimorphus*) from the threatened and endangered species list under the ESA. Based on a review of the petition and information available in our files, it was determined there is substantial scientific or commercial information indicating that delisting the beetle may be warranted. The Service will now undertake a more comprehensive study, known as 12-month review, to determine whether or not to propose the beetle for delisting.

"We are looking to the public, agencies and non-profit organizations to provide us with more information on the status of the species," explained Susan K. Moore, Field Supervisor in the Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office. "To ensure the best decision is made for the species we need our information to be complete and accurate."

The finding does not affect current protections and management of the beetle, nor does it constitute a decision to delist the species. The 12-month review will consider additional information provided by the public and species experts to determine whether or not a change is warranted in the species' status under the ESA. Such a determination would not automatically result in a change in classification. Any change would require a separate formal rule-making process, including additional public review and comment, as defined in section 4(a) of the ESA.

The Service is seeking information on the following five factors:

- 1.) Is there a present or threatened destruction, modification, or curtailment of the species' habitat or range? The Service is also interested in information on measures in place to protect habitat of the species.
- 2.) Is the species subject to overutilization for commercial, recreational, scientific, or educational purposes?
- 3.) Is disease or predation a factor?
- 4.) Are there existing regulatory mechanisms in place outside the ESA (taking into account the

efforts by the States and other organizations) to protect the species or habitat?
5.) Are other natural or manmade factors affecting its continued existence?

Comments may be submitted in one of the following ways:

-- Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>. In the Keywords box, enter Docket No. FWS-R8-ES-2011-0063 and follow the instructions for submitting comments.

-- U.S. mail or hand-delivery: Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS-R8-ES-2011-0063; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, MS 2042-PDM; Arlington, VA 22203.

When commenting, be as specific as possible and include references to scientific journal articles or other publications where possible so the Service can to verify any scientific or commercial information included. Comments by e-mail or faxes will not be accepted.

All information received, including name and addresses will be posted on <http://www.regulations.gov>

Submissions stating support for or opposition to the action under consideration without providing supporting information, although noted, cannot be considered in making a determination. Determinations as to whether any species is an endangered or threatened species are made solely on the basis of the best scientific and commercial data available.

The valley elderberry longhorn beetle is one-half to one-inch long with arching long antennae and vivid, almost iridescent, colors on its forewing covers. Females have metallic green highlights; males exhibit red highlights. The beetle is found only in California's Central Valley, where it depends on a single species for food and shelter, blue elderberry bushes (*Sambucus*) that grow along Central Valley watercourses. These beetles spend most of their lives as larvae inside the stems of the bushes, emerging as adults between March and June to lay their eggs on nearby elderberries. The insects eat elderberry nectar, flowers and leaves.

The beetle was listed as threatened in 1980 due to loss of habitat and inadequate regulatory protection. It was known to occur in less than 10 locations and more than 90 per cent of the Central Valley's original riparian habitat had been lost. Since then, nearly 200 occurrences in 25 locations ranging from Shasta County to Kern County have been confirmed and the rate of riparian habitat loss has been greatly reduced. About 35 percent are on protected lands.

The Endangered Species Act provides a critical safety net for America's native fish, wildlife and plants. This landmark conservation law has prevented the extinction of hundreds of imperiled species across the nation and promoted the recovery of many others.

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/cno. Connect with our Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/usfwspacificsouthwest>, follow our tweets at <http://twitter.com/USFWSPacSWest>, watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our Flickr page at http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfws_pacificsw/

See our 2-part video on the Valley Elderberry Longhorn Beetle at:

Part 1 - http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfws_pacificsw/6057539992/in/set-72157627464944770

Part 2 - http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfws_pacificsw/6057543776/in/set-72157627464944770