



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

NEWS RELEASE

SNAKE RIVER BASIN OFFICE

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PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD REOPENED FOR PROPOSED LISTING OF SLICKSPOT PEPPERGRASS

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced the reopening of the public comment period for the proposed rule to list the plant slickspot peppergrass (*Lepidium papilliferum*) as endangered under the Federal Endangered Species Act.

The period has been reopened to allow additional time for all interested parties to submit written comments on the proposal. The original public comment period closed on September 13, 2002. The new comment closing date is November 25, 2002. Comments must be received by 5:00 p.m. on the closing date. Comments received after that date will not be considered in the final decision. Comments previously submitted need not be resubmitted, as they have already been incorporated into the public record. All comments will be fully considered in the final rule.

This small, rare plant occurs in sagebrush-steppe habitats in southwestern Idaho, including the Snake River Plain, Owyhee Plateau and adjacent foothills in southwestern Idaho. Biologists have documented 70 occurrences of slickspot peppergrass in Ada, Canyon, Gem, Elmore, Payette and Owyhee counties but only six of these areas are considered to be of high quality. The species is no longer found in 18 other historic occurrences. Remaining suitable habitat to support this species is less than 12,400 acres.

The proposed rule, published in the *Federal Register* on July 15, 2002, contains extensive biological information, previous Federal actions and other factors affecting the species. Copies of the draft proposal are available on the Internet at: <http://endangered.fws.gov/frpubs/02fedreg.htm> or by writing the Supervisor, Snake River Basin Office, 1387 S. Vinnell Way, Room 368, Boise, Idaho 83709.

The public may submit comments and materials by one of several other methods. Comments may be submitted by mail or hand-delivered to the Supervisor, Snake River Basin Office, 1387 S. Vinnell Way, Room 368, Boise, Idaho 83709. Facsimile comments will be received at (208) 378-5262; comments must contain the subject line "Lepidium Comments." Electronic submission of comments are to be directed to FW1SRBOComment@fws.gov. The subject line must state "Lepidium Comments." Comments and materials received, including transcripts of the public hearings on the proposed rule, will be available for public inspection, by appointment, during normal business hours at the above address.

For further information, please contact the Snake River Basin Office, 1387 S. Vinnell Way, Room 368, Boise, Idaho 83709, (208) 378-5243.

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The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System which encompasses nearly 540 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas.

It also operates 70 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 78 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

