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NOTE: A line drawing of Guadalupe fescue is available. Please request a jpg from one of the contacts.

Rare Native Grass Will Benefit from Multi-Agency Agreement

Within Big Bend National Park's stunning and vast landscape, there is a bit of uncommon scenery that rarely garners attention. Guadalupe fescue is a rare grass found only on one site in the United States - at Big Bend National Park in Texas. There are two populations in adjacent Coahuila, Mexico. The grass is a candidate for Endangered Species Act protection.

Recently the National Park Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service prepared a Candidate Conservation Agreement to cooperate on the conservation of Guadalupe fescue. Signatories to the agreement include Big Bend National Park, Guadalupe Mountains National Park and the Service's Austin Ecological Services Field Office. The agreement lasts through 2018.

The Candidate Conservation Agreement advocates a number of actions to conserve Guadalupe fescue and minimize threats. If successfully and fully implemented, it may be possible to remove the plant from the candidate list.

The agreement calls for monitoring the known population, establishing a conservation team of experts for the species, educating staff and visitors, monitoring and controlling exotic plants and animals. The plan also calls for cooperating with Mexico to conserve its known populations and search for new ones. Studies to determine the possible need for prescribed burns or other management activities to maintain and improve habitat will be conducted. The agreement also calls for performing genetic studies.

The federal agencies will cooperate to seek funding for the additional studies. The current agreement builds upon one signed between the same parties in 1998 that expired in 2005.

Guadalupe fescue is native to several isolated mountain ranges in western Texas and northern Coahuila, Mexico. It was first found at one location in Guadalupe Mountains National Park in 1931 and at one location in Big Bend National Park later the same year. It has since disappeared from Guadalupe Mountains.

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**.

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