



News Release

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Public Comment Period Reopened for Draft Recovery Plan for Southwestern Endangered Bird

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is reopening the public comment period for the draft Recovery Plan for the southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*) to allow for more input on the suggested methods for helping this endangered bird. The new deadline is December 10.

The Draft Southwestern Willow Flycatcher Recovery Plan describes the status, current management, recovery objectives and criteria, and specific actions needed to reclassify the bird from endangered to threatened, and to ultimately remove it from the list of threatened and endangered species. The draft plan was developed by 13 scientists from various disciplines.

The southwestern willow flycatcher spends summers in Arizona, California, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Texas, and New Mexico breeding and rearing young. Nests are built in the vegetation bordering streams, reservoirs and wetlands. Considerable habitat loss is occurring in these riparian areas which has severely impacted the bird. Each fall, they migrate to the rainforests in Mexico, Central America, and possibly northern South America.

More than 200 community representatives, including ranchers, conservation organizations, water and power interests, local, state and federal land managers, were appointed to discuss proposed recovery actions in six geographic areas where the bird is found. Reopening the comment period will allow for meetings in each of the six regions to fully discuss the recommendations. The draft Plan will be revised and finalized based on comments received during the meetings as well as comments gathered from all sources.

Recovery plans are not binding documents. Rather, they prescribe activities leading to the recovery of a threatened or endangered species. Once comments to the draft recovery plan are addressed and the Service finalizes and approves it, it will serve as a blueprint of steps to conserve the flycatcher and a compass for the development of policy on conservation and management of the species.

Comments on the draft Recovery Plan must be received on or before December 10 to be considered. Send comments to the Field Supervisor at: Arizona Ecological Services Field Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2321 West Royal Palm Road, Suite 103, Phoenix, Arizona, 85021-4951. To obtain copies of the Draft Plan, contact Greg Beatty at this location. All comments will be available for public inspection, by appointment, during normal business hours at the same address.

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 94-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System which encompasses more than 535 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.

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