

**Proposed rule to designate critical habitat for *Consolea corallicola* (Florida semaphore cactus) and *Harrisia aboriginum* (aboriginal prickly-apple)  
January 2015**

**About the Document**

**Title:** Proposed rule to designate critical habitat for *Consolea corallicola* (Florida semaphore cactus) and *Harrisia aboriginum* (aboriginal prickly-apple)

**Purpose:** The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has prepared a proposal to designate critical habitat for *Consolea corallicola* (Florida semaphore cactus) and *Harrisia aboriginum* (aboriginal prickly-apple), two plants endemic to South Florida, under the Endangered Species Act (Act). In total, approximately 4,411 acres (1,785 hectares) for *C. corallicola* in Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties, Florida; and 3,444 acres (1,394 hectares) for *H. aboriginum* in Manatee, Charlotte, Sarasota, and Lee Counties, Florida, fall within the boundaries of the proposed critical habitat designations. We listed *C. corallicola* and *H. aboriginum* as endangered species under the Act on October 24, 2013 (78 FR 63795).

**Proposed rules:**

(1) *Electronically:* Go to the Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>. In the Search box, enter FWS–R4–ES–2014–0057, which is the docket number for the proposed critical habitat designation. You may submit a comment by clicking on “Comment Now!”

(2) *By hard copy:* Submit by U.S. mail or hand-delivery to: Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS–R4–ES–2014–0057, for the proposed critical habitat designation; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; MS: BPHC, 5275 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, VA 22041-3803.

If you would prefer that we send you digital copies of the rules please contact Dave Bender at [david\\_bender@fws.gov](mailto:david_bender@fws.gov).

**About the Peer Review Process**

**Type of Review:** Influential

**Date of Peer Review:** Peer review will occur between January 22, 2015, and March 23, 2015.

**Estimated Dissemination Date of the Final Rulemaking Document:** January 2016

**Process:** The Service will solicit written comments from three independent scientific reviewers. Formal request for peer review will be made by individual letters to experts from various backgrounds at several universities, institutions, and agencies. Reviewers were selected by the Service for their recognized expertise with South Florida

ecosystems, as well as general expertise with plant ecology and conservation. We are following our national policy on peer review and our regional approach for peer review for rulemakings. In selecting peer reviewers, we consider four key factors – expertise, balance, independence, and avoidance of conflict of interest.

This review will be occurring concurrently with the public comment period for the proposed action. The public comment period is now open and will close on March 23, 2015. The Service will use the information received from the peer review process, as appropriate, to develop the final critical habitat rules for the taxa indicated above.

The Service will provide each peer reviewer with information necessary to complete the peer review. We will request that reviewers use the Southeast Region's guidance to ensure that reviews comply with the 1994 policy statement for listing and critical habitat designation under the Act. Peer reviewers are expected to: review all material provided; identify, review, and provide other relevant data; and, provide written comments on relevance and soundness of data, analysis or assumptions of data, and whether we have used the best available science in making the proposed determinations. Peer review comments will be public documents.

### **About Public Participation**

Public comments on the proposed critical habitat designation will be sought with proposed rules published in the *Federal Register* and by mail to interested parties, a press release of the availability of the proposals to interested parties, and a public hearing if requested. The Service will consider all comments received prior to publishing a final determination.

The Service published a notice in the *Federal Register* for the proposed designation of critical habitat for proposed listing of *Consolea corallicola* and *Harrisia aboriginum*. A summary of the results of the peer review will also be published with the final rule determinations in the *Federal Register*.

This peer review plan is made available on this website to allow the public to monitor our compliance with the Office of Management and Budget's Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review.

Contact: Dave Bender, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, South Florida Ecological Services Office, 772-562-3909 ext. 294 or david\_bender@fws.gov.