

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service



News Release

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**RARE PLANT REBOUNDS; U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE DOWNLISTS
STATUS OF MISSOURI BLADDERPOD FROM ENDANGERED TO THREATENED**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today changed the status of the Missouri bladderpod from endangered to threatened – reflecting the fact that this small, flowering plant is making progress toward recovery.

Found in southern Missouri and northern Arkansas, the Missouri bladderpod was listed as endangered in 1987. Under the Endangered Species Act, an endangered species is one that is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range. Threatened species are those that are likely to become endangered in the foreseeable future.

The Service's final decision, published in today's *Federal Register*, cites several factors for the species' progress, including successful management techniques to enhance and protect existing populations, expansion of existing populations, and discovery of new populations. The total population of the Missouri bladderpod was estimated to be about 11,000 plants at nine sites in three Missouri counties when the species was listed as endangered. Threats to the species identified at the time of listing were vulnerability due to low population size; over-collection and human disturbance; lack of information on beneficial management techniques; seed predation by insects; and lack of protection on private property. A recovery plan was completed in 1988.

Since its listing as endangered in 1987, biologists and researchers have discovered that the greatest threats to the bladderpod include overgrazing, urban development, and lack of management of its "glade" habitat to control encroachment by woody plants and aggressive non-native pasture grasses. Surveys conducted after the listing identified 52 new populations of Missouri bladderpod in Missouri. The species was also discovered at two sites in Arkansas. Protection of habitat and use of various management techniques such as prescribed burns have

improved bladderpod habitat. In years when climate and soil conditions are optimum for the species, population estimates may exceed 500,000 plants at all sites combined.

"The Missouri bladderpod is a step closer to recovery, thanks to the Endangered Species Act and the efforts of our State and local partners," said Robyn Thorson, Regional Director for the Service's Great Lakes-Big Rivers Region. "Our ultimate goal is to secure the future of this little plant in the landscape of Missouri and Arkansas so that we can remove it from the list of endangered and threatened species."

Before publishing the final rule today, the Service accepted public comments on its listing proposal, analyzed them, then made the final decision to reclassify the Missouri bladderpod as threatened.

The Missouri bladderpod is an annual plant about eight inches tall. Bright yellow flowers bloom in late April or early May. The species is found in the shallow soils of limestone glades in Christian, Dade, Greene, and Lawrence counties in southwestern Missouri, and at one site in Washington County, Arkansas. The species also has been discovered on one dolomite glade in IZard County, Arkansas.

For more information about the Missouri bladderpod, visit the Service's website at <http://midwest.fws.gov/endangered/>

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 542 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 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.