

## NEWS RELEASE

**U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
Mountain-Prairie Region  
134 Union Boulevard  
Lakewood, Colorado 80228**

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**For Immediate Release**

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### **Draft Economic Analysis of Critical Habitat Proposal for the Colorado Butterfly Plant Released for Public Comment**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today released a draft analysis of the potential economic impacts of a proposal to designate critical habitat for the Colorado butterfly plant, a short-lived perennial herb.

The Colorado butterfly plant (*Gaura neomexicana* spp. *coloradensis*) is protected under the Endangered Species Act as a threatened species. In accordance with a court settlement, the Service proposed on August 6, 2004 to designate 8,486 acres of land along 113 stream miles as critical habitat for the plant in parts of Platte and Laramie counties in Wyoming; Kimball County in Nebraska; and Weld County in Colorado.

The economic analysis estimates the cost of the proposed critical habitat for private landowners, and Federal, State, and local agencies to be within a range from \$7,000 to \$286,700 over the next 20 years. The cost estimate includes probable consultations, project modifications, the development of biological assessments and environmental impact reports, and technical assistance and administrative tasks.

An economic report analyzing the potential impact of designating critical habitat is required whenever critical habitat is proposed. Under the Endangered Species Act, the Fish and Wildlife Service may exclude areas from a critical habitat designation if the benefits of excluding them are greater than the benefits of including them, unless the exclusion would result in the extinction of the protected species.

Because approximately 90 percent of the habitat in the proposed designation occurs on private land in Wyoming, the Service is working with landowners to protect the Colorado butterfly plant through voluntary conservation agreements. Conservation agreements between landowners and the Service that provide sufficient protection to the Colorado butterfly plant will enable the Service to exclude those parcels of land from a critical habitat designation.

The draft analysis will be available for public comment until October 25, 2004.

Native plants are important for their ecological, economic, and aesthetic values. Plants play an important role in development of crops that resist disease, insects, and drought. At least 25 percent of prescription drugs contain ingredients derived from plant compounds, including medicine to treat cancer, heart disease, juvenile leukemia, and malaria, and to assist in organ transplants. Plants are also used to develop natural pesticides.

Comments may be submitted in writing to: Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Wyoming Field Office, 4000 Airport Parkway, Cheyenne, Wyoming 82001, or electronically to: [fw6\\_cobutterflyplant@fws.gov](mailto:fw6_cobutterflyplant@fws.gov). They may also be faxed to 307-772-2358.

Copies of the proposed rule, draft economic analysis and other materials can be downloaded from: [http:// mountain-prairie.fws.gov/species/plants/cobutterfly](http://mountain-prairie.fws.gov/species/plants/cobutterfly)

The Colorado butterfly plant is found in moist areas of floodplains and stands 2 to 3 feet tall with one or a few reddish, fuzzy stems and white flowers that turn pink or red with age. Only a few flowers are open at one time and these are located below the rounded buds and above the mature fruits. Non-flowering plants consist of a stemless, basal rosette of oblong, hairless leaves 1 to 7 inches long.

The primary threats to the plant are haying and mowing at certain times of the year, changes in water use, land conversion for cultivation, competition from exotic plants, non-selective use of herbicides, and loss of habitat to urban development.

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 544 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 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 and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.