

361, Lakewood, Colorado 80215, or by facsimile to 303-275-2371. You may hand deliver written comments to our Colorado Ecological Services Field Office at the address given above. You may send comments by electronic mail (e-mail) to [fw6\\_pmjm@fws.gov](mailto:fw6_pmjm@fws.gov). See the "Public Comments Solicited" section below for file format and other information on electronic filing. You may review comments and materials received, as well as supporting documentation used in preparation of this proposed rule, by appointment, during normal business hours, at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Colorado Field Office.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** LeRoy Carlson, Colorado Field Supervisor, at the above address or telephone 303-275-2370.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

**Background**

The Preble's meadow jumping mouse, a small rodent in the family Zapodidae, is known to occur only in eastern Colorado and southeastern Wyoming. It lives primarily in heavily vegetated riparian habitats and immediately adjacent upland habitats. Habitat loss and degradation caused by agricultural, residential, commercial, and industrial development resulted in the Preble's meadow jumping mouse being listed as a threatened species throughout its range on May 13, 1998 (62 FR 26517).

On July 17, 2000, the Service proposed to designate critical habitat for the Preble's meadow jumping mouse pursuant to the Endangered Species Act (67 FR 47154). The proposed designation includes 19 habitat units totaling approximately 23,248 hectares (57,446 acres) found along 1,058.1 kilometers (657.5 miles) of rivers and streams in Colorado and Wyoming.

Critical habitat identifies specific areas, both occupied and unoccupied, that are essential to the conservation of a listed species and that may require special management considerations or protection. If the proposed rule is made final, section 7 of the Endangered Species Act will prohibit destruction or adverse modification of critical habitat by any activity funded, authorized, or carried out by any Federal agency; and Federal agencies proposing actions affecting areas designated as critical habitat must consult with us on the effects of their proposed actions, pursuant to section 7(a)(2) of the Endangered Species Act.

**Public Comments Solicited**

We intend any final action resulting from the proposal to be as accurate and

as effective as possible. Therefore, we solicit comments or suggestions from the public, other concerned governmental agencies, the scientific community, industry, or any other interested party concerning the proposed rule.

If you wish to comment, you may submit your comments and materials concerning the proposal by any one of several methods (*see ADDRESSES*). If you would like to submit comments by electronic format, please submit them in ASCII file format and avoid the use of special characters and encryption. Please include your name and return e-mail address in your e-mail message. Please note that the e-mail address will be closed out at the termination of the public comment period. If you do not receive confirmation from the system that we have received your message, contact us directly by calling our Colorado Ecological Services Field Office at 303-275-2370.

Our practice is to make comments, including names and home addresses of respondents, available for public review during regular business hours. Individual respondents may request that we withhold their home address, which we will honor to the extent allowable by law. If you wish us to withhold your name or address, you must state this request prominently at the beginning of your comments. However, we will not consider anonymous comments. To the extent consistent with applicable law, we will make all submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, available for public inspection in their entirety. Comments and materials received will be available for public inspection, by appointment, during normal business hours at the address listed under **ADDRESSES**.

**Public Hearings**

The Service will host two public hearings on the proposal on November 21, 2002, at the Jefferson County Courts and Administrative Building at 100 Jefferson County Parkway in Golden, Colorado. The hearings will be held in the First Floor Hearing Room. Information sessions followed by an opportunity to ask questions regarding the proposal will begin at 1 p.m. and 6 p.m. and formal hearings, providing an opportunity to present comments on the proposal, will begin at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m.

**Author**

The author of this notice is Peter Plage, Colorado Field Office (*see*

**ADDRESSES** above), telephone 303-275-2370.

**Authority**

Authority for this action is the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

Dated: October 31, 2002.

**Steve Williams,**

*Director, Fish and Wildlife Service.*

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**DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR**

**Fish and Wildlife Service**

**50 CFR Part 17**

**RIN 1018-A147**

**Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Designation of Critical Habitat for Nine Bexar County, TX, Invertebrate Species**

**AGENCY:** Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

**ACTION:** Proposed rule; notice of availability of draft economic analysis; extension of comment period.

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**SUMMARY:** We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), announce the availability of the draft economic analysis for the proposed designation of critical habitat for nine endangered karst-dwelling invertebrate species pursuant to the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (Act). The proposed rule published in the **Federal Register** on August 17, 2002 (67 FR 55064) and the current comment period is open until November 25, 2002. We are extending the comment period for the proposal to designate critical habitat for these species to allow all interested parties to comment simultaneously on the proposed rule and the associated draft economic analysis. The draft economic analysis shows a range of likely costs from the designation of the proposed critical habitat, including those costs attributable coextensively to listing, of between \$17.8 to \$22.1 million over a 10-year period. Comments previously submitted need not be resubmitted as they will be incorporated into the public record as part of this extended comment period, and will be fully considered in the final rule.

**DATES:** We will accept comments on both the draft economic analysis and the proposed critical habitat designation until December 23, 2002.

**ADDRESSES:** You may submit written comments and materials concerning the

proposal and draft economic analysis at the hearing or send them directly to Renne Lohoefer, Texas State Administrator, Austin Ecological Services Field Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 10711 Burnet Road, Suite 200, Austin, Texas 78758. Written comments may also be sent by facsimile to 512/490-0974. You may also hand-deliver written comments to our U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Austin Ecological Services Field Office at the address given above.

You may view comments and materials received, as well as supporting documentation used in the preparation of this proposed rule, by appointment, during normal business hours in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Austin Ecological Services Field Office at the above address. You may obtain copies of the proposed rule and draft economic analysis from the above address, by calling 512/490-0057, or from our Web site at <http://ifw2es.fws.gov/Library/>.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Bill Seawell, Acting Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Austin Ecological Services Field Office, at the above address (telephone: 512/490-0057; facsimile: 512/490-0974).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The following nine Bexar County, Texas, invertebrate species were listed as endangered on December 26, 2000 (65 FR 81419): *Rhadine exilis* (ground beetle, no common name); *Rhadine infernalis* (ground beetle, no common name); *Batrissodes venyivi* (Helotes mold beetle); *Texella cokendolpheri* (Cokendolpher cave harvestman); *Cicurina baronia* (Robber Baron Cave meshweaver); *Cicurina madla* (Madla Cave meshweaver); *Cicurina venii* (Braken Bat Cave meshweaver); *Cicurina vespera* (Government Canyon Bat Cave meshweaver); and *Neoleptoneta microps* (Government Canyon Bat Cave spider). All of these species are karst dwelling species of local distribution in

north and northwest Bexar County. They spend their entire lives underground.

The proposed critical habitat consists of 25 units (a total of approximately 9,516 acres) in Bexar County, Texas, each encompassing one or more caves or other karst features known to contain one or more of the listed species. "Karst" is a type of terrain that is formed by the slow dissolution of calcium carbonate from limestone bedrock by mildly acidic groundwater. This process creates numerous cave openings, cracks, fissures, fractures, and sinkholes and the bedrock resembles a honeycomb (USFWS 1994). Critical habitat identifies areas that are essential to the conservation of a listed species and that may require special management considerations or protection.

The proposed rule published in the **Federal Register** on August 17, 2002 (67 FR 55064) and the current comment period is open until November 25, 2002. We are extending the comment period for the proposal to designate critical habitat for these species to allow all interested parties to comment simultaneously on the proposed rule and the associated draft economic analysis. We have prepared a draft economic analysis on the effects of the proposed critical habitat designation, and are now announcing its availability for review. The draft analysis estimates the foreseeable economic impacts of the critical habitat designation on government agencies and private businesses and individuals. The draft economic analysis shows a range of likely costs from the designation of the proposed critical habitat of between \$17.8 to \$18 million over a 10-year period. Extending the comment period will provide the public an opportunity to evaluate and comment on both the proposed rule and the draft economic analysis. Comments already submitted on the proposed designation of critical

habitat do not need to be resubmitted as they will be fully considered in the final determinations.

#### Public Comment Solicited

The final economic analysis concerning the designation of critical habitat for these species will consider information and recommendations from all interested parties. We will accept written comments and information during this extended comment period.

We solicit comments or suggestions from the public, other concerned governmental agencies, tribes, the scientific community, industry, or any other interested parties concerning the proposal or the draft economic analysis. We particularly seek comments concerning:

(1) Plans or potential for development within the area proposed to be designated;

(2) Plans or potential for agricultural land-uses within the area proposed to be designated, which might require a permit under section 404 of the Clean Water Act, or other types of Federal permits; and

(3) The likelihood of "stigma effects" and costs associated with the designation; and

Comments and materials received, as well as supporting documentation used in preparation of the proposal to designate critical habitat, will be available for inspection, by appointment, during normal business hours at our office listed in the **ADDRESSES** section.

**Authority:** The authority for this action is the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

Dated: November 7, 2002.

**Paul Hoffman,**

*Acting Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks.*

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