



News Release

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Service Designates Jaguar Critical Habitat in Arizona and New Mexico

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today announced the final designation of approximately 764,207 acres of critical habitat for the jaguar (*Panthera onca*) under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). This habitat is found within Pima, Santa Cruz and Cochise counties in Arizona, and Hidalgo County in New Mexico. The final rule takes effect on April 4, 2014.

The final rule reflects the following changes from the July 1, 2013, critical habitat proposal: Exclusion of Tohono O'odham Nation lands (78,067 acres) as a result of the Tribe's efforts—working in partnership with the Service—to conserve jaguar and other listed species' habitat on the Nation's sovereign land. Exemption of Fort Huachuca lands (15,867 acres) due to the conservation benefits to the jaguar provided in Fort Huachuca's approved Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan.

The Service proposed to designate 838,232 acres of critical habitat for the jaguar in August, 2012. That proposal was informed primarily by a 2011 preliminary habitat modeling report and a recovery outline produced by the Jaguar Recovery Team, consisting of feline ecologists, conservation biologists and other experts from Mexico and the United States.

On July 1, 2013, the Service issued a revised proposal to designate 858,137 acres of critical habitat for the species. The revised proposal was based on an updated habitat modeling report that more accurately reflected habitat essential to jaguars in northwestern Mexico and southwestern United States.

Available jaguar habitat in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands area is very different from habitat in Central and South America, where jaguars show a high affinity for lowland wet communities. Jaguars have been documented in arid areas of northwestern Mexico and southwestern United States, including thornscrub, desertscrub, lowland desert, mesquite grassland, Madrean oak woodland and pine-oak woodland communities. Critical habitat in the United States contributes to the jaguar's persistence and recovery across the species' entire range by providing areas to support individuals that disperse into the United States from the nearest core population in Mexico.

Critical habitat is a term defined in the ESA and identifies geographic areas containing features essential to the conservation of a threatened or endangered species and that may require special management considerations or protection. The designation of critical habitat does not affect land ownership or establish a refuge, and has no impact on private landowners taking actions on their land that do not require federal funding or permits.

To view the final rule, comments and materials received, as well as some supporting documentation, visit <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/Jaguar.htm> and <http://www.regulations.gov>. All comments, materials and documentation that were considered in this rulemaking are available, by appointment, at: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Arizona Ecological Services Fish and Wildlife Office, 2321 West Royal Palm Drive, Suite 103, Phoenix, AZ 85021; phone (602) 242-0210.

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