



U.S. Forest Service
Pacific Southwest Region



December
2015

Species of Conservation Concern: Screening Criteria

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Species of Conservation Concern?

A species of conservation concern (SCC) is a plant or animal for which we have concerns about its ability to remain on a landscape for a long time. Each forest plan has its own SCC list, which is approved by the Regional Forester. The Regional Forester has not yet approved the draft proposed SCC lists.

What is the Species of Conservation Concern list screening criteria?

In July 2015, the Forest Service shared draft proposed Species of Conservation Concern lists for public review on our [regional forest planning website](#). In response to the public feedback we received then, we are now sharing the screening criteria we used to develop our lists. The spreadsheets display the information considered in determining whether a species satisfies the [criteria](#) that must be met to be considered an SCC. These criteria were described in the document titled "Process for identifying draft proposed SCC list," which was shared in July 2015.

Can you provide some tips for understanding the SCC list screening criteria spreadsheets?

The screening criteria information is presented in a set of spreadsheets for each forest. One set applies to the draft proposed plant SCC lists, and the other set applies to the draft proposed animal SCC lists. Within each set, there are two spreadsheets. One spreadsheet identifies those species that were originally considered, but later determined not to occur within the planning area. The other spreadsheet addresses species that were determined to be within the planning area. The spreadsheets display the information considered in determining whether a species satisfies the criteria that must be met to be considered an SCC.

What are the species analysis examples you are providing?

We are providing two examples in narrative form (Gilman's goldenbush and Great gray owl) of our assessment for determining threats to the species and whether the proposed plan components provide the ecological conditions necessary to support viable populations of an SCC, as defined by long-term persistence. These examples represent an approach for documenting this analysis. Our SCC analysis as well as our work on the plan components associated with these SCC lists is ongoing. The public will have a full opportunity to review our draft analysis and draft forest plan components when we release the draft environmental impact statement.

Have the draft proposed Species of Conservation Concern lists changed from what the Forest Service shared in July 2015?

Yes. As we continue our analysis, our findings evolve because we uncover new information about the species within these forests based on our own internal reviews and information provided by the public. In our continuing internal review of the SCC lists, we have identified some species that need to be re-evaluated for a variety of reasons such as new or contradictory information. For instance, the greater sage-grouse has been added to our draft proposed list for the Inyo National Forest because it is no longer a candidate species under the Endangered Species Act. Also, we have removed the Sierra Nevada red fox from the draft proposed SCC lists that we released in July because the Fish and Wildlife Service identified the animal as a candidate species. This designation still retains the species as "at risk," but moves it into a different category of federally listed, proposed or candidate species which will also be addressed in the draft forest plans.

What is the difference between an "SCC" and a Threatened or Endangered species?

A species of conservation concern (SCC) is a Forest Service-specific classification that comes from the 2012 Planning Rule and subsequent direction in the Forest Service Handbook (FSH 1909 Chapter 12). The regulations describe an SCC as a species for which the best available science indicates there is a substantial concern about the species' capability to persist over the long-term in the plan area. If there is a concern, we design elements of the forest plan to provide the conditions that will enable the species to persist on the forest. An SCC is not a federally threatened, endangered, proposed or candidate species under the Endangered Species Act. We create an SCC list using the best available science in a proactive step intended to prevent species from becoming federally listed.

Threatened and endangered species are federally designated under the Endangered Species Act of 1973. This Act was created to protect critically imperiled species from extinction. Similarly to how we address SCCs, if species that are listed or candidates for listing under the Endangered Species Act are present on the forest, then the forest plan would contain direction designed to prevent the species from further decline and contribute to their recovery. Even if the federally listed species is not currently known to be present on the forest but habitat critical to their recovery has been identified on the forest, our forest plan would contain direction to maintain that habitat.

How do SCCs influence forest plan revisions?

Once we have an SCC list, we determine the needs of each species. We then design forest plans to guide management that sustains habitat or conditions to support or restore secure SCC populations to the extent we are capable of doing so. Forest plans help us maintain a forest that provides SCCs with the habitat and conditions they need to survive.

For instance, each forest plan will have certain components, including desired conditions and standards or guidelines, to sustain or restore ecosystem diversity and habitats. Where we meet the needs of multiple species by taking care of the ecosystem as a whole, we consider these “coarse” filter plan components. If the coarse filter plan components do not provide the conditions each SCC requires to persist on the forest, then we include additional species-specific plan components. These latter components are “fine” filters.

Are these SCC lists and rationale final?

No. While we’ve shared our draft proposed SCC lists for each forest, they are not final, nor is our rationale. In our continuing analysis since July, we have discovered contradictory or new information about several species. We are continuing our analysis, so the lists and the associated rationale may change before we release the draft environmental impact statement and forest plans. The lists may also change from the draft forest plans to the final forest plans based on the information we gather now and during upcoming public comment periods.

Can I provide input now?

If you know of a species that we missed in our analysis, or a species that we should not have included in our analysis, let us know. The most helpful information would be why you think a species meets or doesn’t meet the SCC [criteria](#) for consideration. Please provide evidence to support your reasoning. If you have questions, concerns or feedback about our SCC draft proposed lists or process please contact Joan Friedlander at 858-674-2962 or submit your input via Web-form at: <http://tinyurl.com/earlyadoptersfpr>. Feedback is most useful if received by February 1, 2016.

What will the Forest Service do with public input on the SCC lists?

We will consider all the input we receive. When we review the feedback, we will ask ourselves if the input offers valid scientific information we have yet to consider. If so, we may remove or add species from the list based on the valid scientific information we receive. Such changes will be documented in the SCC list released in either the draft or the final forest plans.

How is the Forest Service collaborating with the public?

This is our first opportunity to use the 2012 Planning Rule, so many of its requirements are new to us. We appreciate your patience and participation; we are sharing information and engaging with the public as we can. In the past year, we’ve convened public discussions on several plan revision topics as we have information available, including:

- *June 2014*: Preliminary wilderness inventory, step one of the wilderness evaluation process

- *August 2014:* Began National Environmental Policy Act process for forest plan revisions; shared our final wilderness inventory
- *November 2014:* Shared issues and concerns heard during public scoping
- *January 2015:* Sierra Cascade Dialog session about monitoring programs
- *May 2015:* Update on our wilderness evaluation progress
- *June 2015:* Inyo National Forest hosted a wilderness evaluation public workshop
- *July 2015:* Released draft proposed species of conservation concern lists
- *September 2015:* Shared our process for wilderness evaluation and identifying areas for potential wilderness recommendation; invited public feedback on our proposed draft monitoring programs
- *October 2015:* Sierra Cascade Dialog session about wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, species of conservation concern, and the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail
- *December 2015:* Shared our Wild and Scenic Rivers inventory and eligibility findings; invited public feedback

###

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.