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**Subject:** List of Species of Conservation Concern for Rio Grande National Forest

**To:** Forest Supervisor, Rio Grande National Forest

The requirements for developing the list of Species of Conservation Concern (SCC) are outlined in Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.12, Section 12.52b. The Responsible Official for the Forest Plan Revision (Forest Supervisor) is required to coordinate with the Responsible Official for the SCC list, which is the Regional Forester.

I have enclosed a preliminary list of SCC for the Rio Grande National Forest to consider in the development of the Forest Plan Revision. This list includes both wildlife and plant species and is a product of work conducted by several specialists of the Renewable Resources staff and the Strategic Planning staff at both the Regional and Forest level. I have also included a white paper developed by the Regional Office, which documents the process used to develop the preliminary list of SCC.

Because the SCC list was not identified prior to the initiation of the Assessment phase, FSH 1909.12, sec. 12.52b (1)(c) is the process that should be followed, specifically:

*“The Responsible Official and Regional Forester may review and adjust a previously developed list of potential species of conservation concern derived from plan area or multi-plan area studies or broad-scale assessments.”*

I am instructing the directors of Strategic Planning and Renewable Resources to coordinate with you through the National Environmental Policy Act phase of the plan revision to finalize the list of SCC. If you have any questions, please contact either Ken Tu, Acting Director of Planning or Steve Lohr, Director of Renewable Resources.

/s/ James S. Bedwell (for)  
JACQUELINE A. BUCHANAN  
Acting Regional Forester

Enclosure



## **At-risk Species**

### **Process for Forest List Development and Regional Forester Approval**

### **Rocky Mountain Region**

This guidance paper for the Rocky Mountain Region (Region 2) documents the process of development, review and Regional Forester approval of “at risk” species (collectively, threatened, endangered, proposed and candidate (TEPC) species and species of conservation concern (SCC)). This guidance applies to plan revision or plan amendment (if necessary). The lists of “at-risk” species serve two main purposes:

- (1) help generate plan components, both coarse filter (habitat) and fine filter (species-specific needs), necessary to either maintain viable populations of SCC species, or help recover federally recognized species. Where it is beyond the authority of the Forest Service and the inherent capability of the plan area to maintain or restore ecological conditions necessary to maintain viable populations of SCC within the boundaries of the plan area, the plan components should *contribute* to maintaining viability of SCC *within their ranges* (36 CFR 219.9(b)(1 & 2) – 2012 Planning Rule) and conservation and recovery of TEPC species,
- (2) help identify plan monitoring components that will enable monitoring the status of a select set of ecological conditions that contribute to or maintain viable populations of SCC and conservation and recovery of TEPC species for the plan area (36 CFR 219.12(a)(5)(iv); FSH 1909.12, Chapter 30, Section 32.1 and 32.13b).

The potential SCC list is used for both of the purposes identified above, and is initially generated by the Forest Supervisor during the assessment phase of Revision or the pre-scoping phase of an Amendment (if necessary). The list can, and should be, refined throughout plan development (draft and final) and through the objection process, if new information comes to light that indicates additional species merit consideration as SCC or conversely indicates there is no longer a viability concern for a species on the SCC list (likely a very rare occurrence for a species to be removed from a SCC list). Therefore, the potential list of SCC will not be finalized for 2012 Rule Revision Forests until the Record of Decision (ROD) is signed for the revised plan at the end of the revision process.

While the Forest Supervisor is the Responsible Official for the overall Plan revision or amendment, the Regional Forester is the Responsible Official for the list of SCC for each Forest (FSH 1909.12, Chapter 20, Section 21.22a). The Planning Directives (FSH 1909.12, Chapter 10, Section 12.52 and Chapter 20, Section 21.22) further identify the processes and criteria for generating SCC lists and gaining the Regional Forester’s concurrence on those lists. For Region 2 Forests, we have elected to prioritize option 1b of section 12.52b: ***The Plan’s Responsible Official (Forest Supervisor) provides an initial list of potential SCC for review by the Regional Forester, who may concur or request modification.*** This is negotiable between the Forest and Regional Office depending on preferences and needs of the Forest at the time, but will be the starting point as a general rule.

### ***Selection of At-Risk Species***

The process begins with identifying federally threatened, endangered, proposed and candidate species and species of conservation concern for the plan area based on the best available information. The identification of the federally recognized species relative to the plan area and planning process should be coordinated with the

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FSH 1909.12, Chapter 10, Section 12.51) and the Regional TES Species Program Leader. Forest Service directives provide criteria for selection of species of conservation concern (SCC) (FSH 1909.12 Chapter 10, Section 12.52c). Documenting the process of developing species lists including rationale for including and excluding species from these lists is very important. A table or spreadsheet is a particularly useful tool for tracking the selection of species based on the relevant criteria, and documenting the rationale for any species that were screened and not proposed for further consideration in the planning process. Place the table in the administrative record.

### **Threatened, Endangered, Proposed and Candidate Species**

All species that are federally listed under the ESA, proposed for listing under the ESA, or candidates for listing, that are known or likely to occur on the administrative unit, or that occur nearby and may be affected by management activities on NFS lands, must be included on the forest list. A matrix that presents current knowledge about the occurrence of these species on or near each administrative unit in Region 2 is available on the fsweb at [http://fsweb.r2.fs.fed.us/rr/tes/tes\\_listedspp.html](http://fsweb.r2.fs.fed.us/rr/tes/tes_listedspp.html). Also available are species lists from the Department of Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's "Information for Planning and Conservation" database (IPaC; <https://ecos.fws.gov/ipac/>). Local Forest survey information where they exist for TEPC species will be particularly helpful. All proposed TEPC lists should be coordinated with the local U.S Fish and Wildlife Service office.

### **Species of Conservation Concern**

Species of conservation concern (SCC) are those other than federally recognized threatened, endangered, proposed, or candidate species, that are known to occur in the plan area and for which the Regional Forester has determined that the best available scientific information indicates substantial concern about the species' capability to persist over the long-term in the plan area (36 CFR 219.9(b)(3)). The Regional Forester and responsible official may jointly develop the list of potential SCC for the plan area, or the responsible official may identify an initial list for consideration by the Regional Forester, or the Regional Forester and responsible official may review and adjust a previously developed list of potential SCCs for the plan area, or the Regional Forester may develop an initial list of SCCs for the plan area that the responsible official may adopt or request modification (FSH 1909.12 section 12.52). Public involvement during the assessment phase of plan development, revision or amendment, should include opportunity for the public to provide input to the proposed SCC list (FSH 1909.12, Chapter 10, Section 12.52a; Chapter 40, Section 42.11). The criteria for identifying species of conservation concern are as follows (FSH 1909.12 section 12.52):

- 1) SCC are defined as:
  - a) *A native species*. A native species is an organism historically present in an ecosystem as a result of natural migratory or evolutionary processes, and not as a result of an accidental or deliberate introduction. Native species should also be recognized species. Avoid informal taxa, typically identified by English appellations such as 'Species 1' or 'Population A.' Nomenclature should follow NatureServe.
  - b) *Known to occur in the planning area*. A species is known to occur in a plan area if, at the time of plan development, the best available scientific information indicates that a species is established or is becoming established there. In general, consider where the weight of evidence points you in determining this. There should be a reasonably current record or Element Occurrence [EO] on the

forest (within the forest boundary). Avoid species that are known only from historical records, or for which the best available science leads to a conclusion that the species is no longer present. There is no definite standard for when a record or EO becomes historical, but, as records become more historical, they are less likely to meet the 'known to occur' criterion. A species with an individual occurrence in a plan area that is merely "accidental" or "transient," or are well outside the species' existing range at the time of plan development, is not established or becoming established in the plan area. If the range of a species is changing so that what is becoming its "normal" range includes the plan area, an individual occurrence should not be considered transient or accidental.

- c) Substantial concern for persistence in the planning area. "Substantial" concern is best demonstrated by some combination of threats either directly to the species or indirectly to its characteristic habitat: declines in the sizes and/or numbers of its populations and/or declines in its habitat. In addition, conservation concern is not limited to Forest Service actions. Regardless of the influence of NFS management on species, a species must be identified as an SCC if "the best available scientific information indicates substantial concern about the species' capability to persist over the long-term in the plan area" (36 CFR 219.9). Concerns such as climate change, non-native species, and genetic swamping can all be valid threats for certain species. Persistence is defined as continued existence (36 CFR 219.19). We believe the implication is for persistence in ecological time, which is the time period associated with ecological processes, ranging from dispersal and competition on the shorter end, to forest succession on the longer end – so longer than the forest planning cycle, but bounded by processes that can be addressed through ecological analyses. Solid data often do not exist to confidently confirm persistence status for species from the scale of a plan area, so again where does the weight of evidence from the forest and other sources lead you in concluding concerns for persistence of a species on the forest? Document the rationale.

Note that SCC designations are completed before the Forest begins assessing ecological conditions and developing plan components to ensure their persistence.

- 2) Criteria for SCC Consideration. FSH 1909.19, Chapter 10, Section 12.52d, identifies species for consideration as SCC for the Forest. Note that the requirement is only for consideration; the handbook direction does not require SCC designation for any species, or category of species. However, G/T1 or G/T2 species are expected to be included unless it can be demonstrated and documented that known threats for these species, such as those threats listed for the species by NatureServe, are not currently present or relevant in the plan area.

- a) Species that *must* be considered. The Forest must consider the following species:
1. Species with a NatureServe status rank of G/T1 or G/T2,
  2. Species that were removed within the past 5 years from the Federal list of threatened or endangered species, and other delisted species that the Fish and Wildlife Service still monitors.

Species with NatureServe G/T1 or G/T2 status ranks are expected to be included, unless it can be demonstrated and documented that known threats for these species, such as those threats listed for the species by NatureServe, are not currently present or relevant in the plan area. This must be documented clearly. If not so documented, the species must be listed as a SCC.

- b) Species that *should* be considered. The Forest should also consider the following species:

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1. Species with status ranks of G/T 3 or S 1-2 on the NatureServe ranking system, which categorizes the viability status of species.;
2. Species listed as threatened or endangered by the relevant States, federally recognized Tribes, or Alaska Native Corporations;
3. Species identified on other relevant Federal, State, federally recognized Tribes, or Alaska Native Corporations lists as being a high priority for conservation;
4. Species identified as SCCs in adjoining NFS plan areas (including plan areas across regional boundaries); and
5. Species where valid available information indicates the species are of local conservation concern due to:
  - a. Significant threats to populations or habitat from stressors on and off the plan area.
  - b. Declining trends in populations or habitat.
- c) Restricted ranges (for example, narrow endemics, disjunct populations, or species at the edge of their range).

Because the initial list of potential SCC begins with the Regional Forester sensitive species known or likely to occur on the Forest, many of these information sources have been considered in species selection. However, not all species that may be on other agency or organization lists may have met the Region 2 criteria for sensitive even though they may have been evaluated. These other sources and lists should be reviewed by the Forest as needed to look for potentially important gaps in the developing SCC list. Examples include the NatureServe records for the forest (housed on the Region's T drive), latest State wildlife action plans ([www.teaming.com/state-wildlife-action-plans-swaps](http://www.teaming.com/state-wildlife-action-plans-swaps)), the FWS's birds of conservation concern (2008), Partners in Flight's "Species Assessment Database" (<http://rmbo.org/pifassessment/>), and others as appropriate.

Conversely, level of risk to a species can vary across Forests where a species occurs on multiple units even for the species identified as Regional Forester sensitive. Hence, the potential Forest SCC list should also consider whether some of these species that met criteria for Regional designation still makes sense for the Forest given level of local risk and concern.

### ***Deliberative Process Leading to Regional Forester Approval of SCC***

With the above as background, the following is the process of obtaining Regional review of initial potential SCC lists, and of submittal of a final list to the Regional Forester for concurrence or modification:

1. Work with the Regional TES Species Program Leader (currently Peter McDonald) and lead Regional Planner (John Rupe), throughout your SCC screening process to ensure proper documentation and initial list generation. Also involved closely will be the Regional Botanist and Fisheries Program Leader.
2. The forest should use all available resources to identify species. The current Regional Forester's Sensitive Species list [RFSS] is based on the same general selection criteria as SCC, and should be the

starting point for an initial SCC list. Public involvement will also be important to refining the initial proposed list.

3. Designating SCC is a two-step process. First, the forest should identify the species for consideration, using the RFSS list for the forest and considering the Criteria for SCC Consideration, described above. Second, the forest should designate their SCC, based on 'substantial concern for persistence in the planning area,' also described above [Section 1]. A deliberative spreadsheet should be used to document the designation process.

*As an example, here is how the initial list was developed for the Rio Grande Plan Revision. First, all RFSS animal species known or likely on the forest were considered. In addition, Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP) data was used to look for all animal species on or near the forest that had Natureserve Rankings of G/T1, G/T2, G/T3, S1 or S2. This was done through a simple GIS search using data provided by CNHP. The RFSS and CHHP-provided Natureserve rankings provided an initial list of 42 animal species (which included TECP species in addition to those considered for SCC). The Rio Grande Forest biologist also added 15 animal species based on his personal knowledge working on the Forest. A final go-through by RO and Forest staff found that one species (Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep) had been inadvertently missed on the list.*

*The initial list of 34 plant species was provided by the Forest. Then the Regional Botanist added 28 additional plant species to the list using Natureserve rankings and CNHP records.*

*A total of 112 SCC and 8 TEPC species were initially identified.*

4. Once the Forest has completed the initial potential list of SCC in coordination with the RO, submit it and the documented rationale for inclusion and exclusion of the proposed SCC that went through the screening process to the TES Species and Planning leads. For 2012 Rule Revision Forests, this submittal should be concurrent with the submittal of your draft Assessment Report for Regional Revision Team review. For '82 Rule transitioning Forests, this submittal should occur prior to sharing with your publics the proposed updates (administrative changes) to your plan monitoring program. The RO WFRP staff should take anywhere from 2 weeks to a month (for 2012 Rule Forests this review will likely be coincident with the Revision Team review of your draft Assessment Report). At this time the TES Program Leader and Lead Regional Planner will also brief the Regional Strategic Planning and Renewable Resources directors about the process for development of the initial SCC list, who will then apprise the Deputy Regional Forester, Resources prior to any public release of the proposed SCC list. Response back to the Forest may include suggested additions to or subtractions from the list based on the regional Renewable Resources and Strategic Planning input.
5. For 2012 Rule Revision Forests, utilize the feedback from the RO WFRP staff, and feedback from Revision Team review, and from your publics on your draft Assessment Report (for Plan revisions), to update as necessary your initial potential SCC list and supporting documentation (including rationale for inclusion or exclusion). For plan revisions, This may take several months (particularly the public feedback portion) before you complete updating and are ready to submit your list to the Regional Forester. For '82 rule Forests, utilize the feedback from the RO WFRP staff to update as necessary your

initial potential SCC list and supporting documentation – this should take a matter of hours or a few days to do so.

*As an example, for the Rio Grande Plan Revision there were 112 SCC species initially identified. During public comment on the Assessment, the Defenders of Wildlife suggested six additional species for consideration. (No other public comment on the list was received).*

*During a joint review by Regional and Forest staff, 23 species were removed due to lack of documented presence on the planning unit, and 3 were removed due to lack of substantial concern for persistence. One species (Wolverine) was moved from the SCC list to the TECP list due to a change in status by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Due to additional information, 2 species were added to the list.*

6. After the above updating has occurred, formally submit your initial potential SCC list in a letter from your Forest Supervisor to the Regional Forester. That letter should very succinctly summarize your process for generating the initial potential SCC list, and include as attachments to the letter, your initial potential SCC list and the supporting documentation of rationale. You must include as CCs to this letter the Directors of Renewable Resources and Strategic Planning, as well as the TES Species Program Leader (McDonald) and Lead Regional Planner (Rupe), so that we are aware that the letter has been sent. Once the letter has been submitted, the RO WFRP staff will review your list and documentation of rationale once again, focusing on any changes made since the previous review. Once the Directors hear from the WFRP staff that your list is good to go, they will discuss your initial potential list with the Regional Forester, in order to gain concurrence or to identify any desire by the Regional Forester for modification. For 2012 Rule Revision Forests, this formal submission of your list for concurrence or modification should occur just prior to your issuing your NOI (NEPA Notice of Intent to revise your current plan). For '82 Rule transitioning Forests, this formal submission must occur prior to sharing your proposed monitoring transition changes with your publics.
7. For 2012 Rule Forests, if any adjustments are made to your initial SCC list during plan development (draft and final) and objection, then your updated lists and documentation must be submitted for RO WFRP staff review of the updates and formal RF concurrence at key milestones (prior to publishing the draft plan/DEIS, prior to publishing final plan/FEIS, prior to final resolution of objections). Your SCC list does not become final until you have a final approved revised plan at the end of your revision process. For '82 rule Forests, if public feedback on your proposed monitoring transition administrative changes results in any proposed adjustment to your SCC list, then your updated lists and documentation must be submitted for RO WFRP staff review of the updates and formal RF concurrence prior to your being able to finalize those proposed monitoring transition administrative changes. Your SCC list becomes final with finalization of your proposed monitoring administrative changes.

## Species of Conservation Concern for Rio Grande National Forest

<b>Common Name</b>	<b>Latin Name</b>
<b>Animals</b>	
Boreal toad	<i>Anaxyrus boreas</i>
Western bumblebee	<i>Bombus occidentalis</i>
White-veined arctic butterfly	<i>Oeneis bore</i>
Rio Grande chub	<i>Gila pandora</i>
Rio Grande cut-throat trout	<i>Oncorhynchus clarkia virginalis</i>
Rio Grande sucker	<i>Catostomus plebeus</i>
Bald Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>
Boreal Owl	<i>Aegolius funerus</i>
Brewer's Sparrow	<i>Spizella breweri</i>
Flammulated Owl	<i>Otus flamineolus</i>
Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>
Northern Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentiles</i>
Olive-sided flycatcher	<i>Contopus cooperi</i>
Peregrine falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus anatum</i>
Southern White-tailed ptarmigan	<i>Lagopus leucurus altipetens</i>
American martin	<i>Martes americana</i>
Fringed myotis	<i>Myotis thysanodes</i>
Gunnison's prairie dog	<i>Cynomys gunnisoni</i>
Hoary bat	<i>Lasiurus cinereus</i>
Northern pocket gopher	<i>Thomomys talpoides agrestis</i>
Plains pocket mouse	<i>Perognathus flavescens</i>
River otter	<i>Lontra canadensis</i>
Rocky mountain bighorn sheep	<i>Ovis canadensis canadensis</i>
Townsend's big-eared bat	<i>Corynorhinus townsendii townsendii</i>
<b>Plants</b>	
Black Canyon gilia	<i>Alicelia/Gilia penstemonoides</i>
Stonecrop gilia	<i>Aliciella/Gilia sedifolia</i>
Houses Stitchwort	<i>Aisinnanthe macrantha</i>
Vierhapper's/Alpine aster	<i>Aster alpinus var. vierhapperi</i>
Brandgee's milkvetch	<i>Astragalus brandegeei</i>
Ripley's milkvetch	<i>Astragalus ripleyi</i>
Northern moonwort	<i>Botrychium pinnatum</i>
Little grapefern/least moonwort	<i>Botrychium simplex</i>
Mud sedge	<i>Carex limosa</i>
Shortflower indian paintbrush	<i>Castilleja puberula</i>
Dwarf alpine hawksbeard	<i>Crepis/Askellia nana</i>
Weber's catseye	<i>Cryptantha/Oreocarya weberi</i>
Slender cliffbreak	<i>Cryptogramma stelleri</i>
Mountain bladderfern	<i>Cystopteris/Felix montana</i>

<b>Common Name</b>	<b>Latin Name</b>
Wahatoya Creek larkspur	<i>Delphinium alpestre</i>
Rocky Mountain draba/San Juan whitlow-grass	<i>Draba graminea</i>
Gray's draba	<i>Draba grayana</i>
Smith's draba/Smith's whitlow-grass	<i>Draba smithii</i>
Alpine tundra draba/Colorado divide whitlow-grass	<i>Draba streptobrachia</i>
Philadelphia fleabane/Philadelphia daisy	<i>Erigeron philadelphicus</i>
Slender cottongrass	<i>Eriophorum gracile</i>
Many-flowered Ipomopsis/Many-flowered gilia	<i>Ipomopsis/Gilia multiflora</i>
Spiny-spore quillwort	<i>Isoetes tenella</i>
Colorado woodrush	<i>Luzula subcapita</i>
Colorado Tansy-aster	<i>Machaeranthera coloradoensis</i>
Parry's oxytrope/Parry's crazy-weed	<i>Oxytropis parryi</i>
Silkyleaf cinquefoil/Southern Rocky Mountain cinquefoil	<i>Potentilla ambigens</i>
Arizona willow	<i>Salix arizonica</i>
Tufted alpine saxifrage	<i>Saxifraga caespitosa</i> sub. <i>monticola</i>
King's campion	<i>Silene kingii</i>
Sphagnum bog-moss	<i>Sphagnum angustifolium</i> (multiple taxonomic synonyms)
Rothrock's Townsend daisy	<i>Townsendia rothrockii</i>
New Mexico cliff fern	<i>Woodsia neomexicana</i>
Plummer's cliff fern	<i>Woodsia plummerae</i>