

Northern Region Forest Service 2004 Sensitive Species List Update Process For Wildlife

September 8, 2004

The following outlines the 2003-04 review and update process for the wildlife portion of the March 1999 R1 Sensitive Species List.

I. BACKGROUND:

A task group of wildlife biologists developed and carried out the following Sensitive Species review process, with additional review by all Forest, Forest Plan Planning and some District Wildlife Biologists at selected times in the process. The task group included:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Unit</u>
Marion Cherry	Forest Wildlife Biologist Gallatin NF
Steve Blair	Forest Wildlife Biologist Nez Perce NF
Rachel Feigley	District Wildlife Biologist Livingston RD
John Ormiston	Forest Wildlife Biologist Bitterroot NF
Art Rohrbacher	Forest Wildlife Biologist Beaverhead-Deerlodge NF
Arden Warm	District Wildlife Biologist Medora RD
Tom Whitford	Forest Wildlife Biologist Custer NF
Tom Wittinger	Regional TES Program Leader

In addition, meetings were held that included the wildlife task group and representatives for rare plants, and fisheries. These meeting resulted in coordinated efforts and very similar review and update processes between the different species groups.

Thirty-seven wildlife species were listed as Sensitive on the 1999 R1 Sensitive Species list. The 1999 list was developed using a mathematical ranking process, with a minimum score required for inclusion on the list. Only species suggested by Forests, Regional personnel, State agencies, and some interested publics (usually academics) were considered for the list. Species considered were then ranked (ranks were estimates developed by a Forest Service Biologists task group) for population size, population distribution, population trend, level of habitat specialization, and level of threat to habitat. A minimum score of 15 was required for inclusion on the list, with population size; level of endemism, and level of habitat risk the elements that carried high numerical values. Although it also appears that some species were included on the list without going through the ranking process. Documentation detailing a list of all species considered, the rationale for species that were included, and those not included on the list is lacking. The current list is an accumulation of a number of listing and review processes occurring from the late 1980s through 1999.

An alternative process is proposed for the 2004 update of the Sensitive Species list. The proposed process primarily relied upon State Natural Heritage ranking processes rather than ranking by Forest Service Biologists, and as a consequence of the State ranking process will continue to provide considerable weight based on population size, level of endemism, and level of habitat risk, but also increased the weight given to population trend and/or reduction in range. This process change resulted in greater similarity between wildlife, fish, and plants in processes used to compile the Sensitive Species List.

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Carrying out this process resulted in the following wildlife species results, and relative changes from the 1999 Sensitive Species list, see the following table.

The following table displays the number of wildlife species, by species group, included on the 1999 Sensitive Species List, the number of wildlife species reviewed for inclusion to the Sensitive Species List during the 2004 update process, the number of wildlife species proposed for inclusion to the 2004 updated Sensitive Species List, the number of species on the 1999 List that were not included on the updated List, and the number of wildlife species that were not included on the 1999 List but are proposed to be added to the updated list.

Species Group	99 List	Updated Starting Review List	Draft Proposed List	Dropped From The 99 List	Added To The 99 List	Changed Area From 99 List
Birds	16	196	18	3	5	2
Mammals	11	75	16	3	6	
Amphibians	3	30	5		2	1
Reptiles		37	5		5	
Cave Arachnids		1				
Cave Crustaceans		6				
Insects	7	70	9	1	3	2
Mollusks		72				
Total	37	487	53	7	21	5

II. SENSITIVE SPECIES DIRECTION:

The following displays Forest Service Manual (FSM) direction for development of Sensitive Species Lists.

FSM 2670.12 – Secretary of Agriculture’s Policy on Fish and Wildlife.

2670.2 – Objectives.

2670.22 - Sensitive Species.

1. Develop and implement management practices to ensure that species do not become threatened or endangered because of Forest Service actions.
2. Maintain viable populations of all native and desired nonnative wildlife, fish, and plant species in habitats distributed throughout their geographic range on National Forest System lands.
3. Develop and implement management objectives for populations and/or habitat

FSM 2670.5-19 defines Sensitive Species as the following:

19. Sensitive Species. Those plant and animal species identified by the Regional Forester for which population viability is a concern, as evidenced by:
 - a) Significant current or predicted downward trends in population numbers or density.
 - b) Significant current or predicted downward trends in habitat capability that would reduce a species’ existing distribution.

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FSM 2672.11 – Identification of Sensitive Species. Regional Foresters shall identify sensitive species occurring within the Region. They shall examine the following sources as possible candidates for listing as sensitive species:

1. Fish and wildlife Service or National Marine Fisheries Service candidates for Federal listing (categories 1 and 2) under Federal Register Notice of Review.
2. State lists of endangered, threatened, rare, endemic, unique, or vanishing species, especially those listed as threatened under State law.
3. Other sources as appropriate in order to focus conservation management strategies and to avert the need for Federal or State listing as a result of National Forest management activities.

III. OPERATIONAL ELEMENTS:

The following displays operational elements that were utilized in the implementation of identified FSM direction. First are listed general operating assumptions that were considered in development of more detailed operational “rules” described secondly.

Operating Assumptions:

- ❖ The Sensitive Species process is a companion process with Forest Planning, with both designed to protect and provide for wildlife that reside on National Forests. Species needs were considered at the operationally most efficient population and habitat scale possible.
- ❖ Questions of species viability, related to population and/or habitat, were the primary consideration that determined Sensitive Species status. Forest Service management actions effect many species populations and/or habitats, but species were not considered for Sensitive Species status unless viability was a concern.
- ❖ A species was considered a candidate for Sensitive status at the Regional scale only when viability risk at the state or global scale was indicated, with the distribution of concern and accountability identified at the Forest scale.
- ❖ All species of “concern” identified through the described process were evaluated for Sensitive status, neither species nor groups of species that met initial “concern” criteria were eliminated without documentation.
- ❖ All decisions to eliminate or retain species on the Sensitive Species List were supported by process criteria, were documented in the evaluation process, or a specific rationale was provided.
- ❖ The Sensitive Species List provides management protections for species during LRMP and project development and implementation. The conclusion of this updating process may provide recommendations for species protections other than inclusion on the Sensitive Species List.

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Operational Rules:

- ❖ **Source Lists:** The primary source of species considered for Sensitive Species status was the Natural Heritage Program (NHP). Species of Concern Lists for the States of Idaho (2003), Montana (2003), North Dakota (2003), and South Dakota (2003); with consideration for species identified by 1) Partners In Flight, 2) BLM Sensitive species lists, 3) USFWS “candidate spp list” and Migratory bird species of concern list, 4) Sensitive Species lists from adjacent FS Regions, 5) Suggested mollusk, reptile and amphibian spp from “local academic experts” that consult with NHPs, and 6) lists that were developed by the BIA, NPS, and Native American Tribes were utilized to compile a starting review list of wildlife species that may require Sensitive Species management considerations.

Step 1 Conclusion Statement: *The result of this step in the process was multiple lists of wildlife species for which some concern for population reduction or viability was identified by the individual organizations.*

- ❖ **Ranking Process:** The NHP species ranking process was utilized as the primary tool to identify those species that require special and/or fine scale considerations in order to adequately provide for their continued viability. Species that met NHP criteria for G1-G3 or S1-S2 were considered candidates for the R1 Sensitive Species List. Species from all sources resulted in a starting review list of 487 wildlife species.

The following table outlines population and risk elements, and their levels/amounts, that result in State Rank values. The MT NHP developed the table, but it is assumed that similar processes are utilized by other State NHPs.

The following table reflects the ranking elements used in the development of State Ranks for Montana. It was assumed that other states use similar elements in the development of their state ranks.

Criteria	Score					
	0	1	2	3	4	5
Abundance	Unknown	Very rare (<1000)	Rare to Uncommon (1001-3000)	Uncommon to Fairly common (3001-10,000)	Common Including locally Abundant (10,000-?)	Abundant (>?)
Number of Occurrences	Unknown	Very Small (<5)	Small (6-20)	Medium (21-100)	Large (100-?)	Very Large
Effective Population per Occurrence	Unknown	Very Small (<5)	Small (6-20)	Medium (21-100)	Large (100-?)	Very Large
Distribution	Unknown	Very Restricted (3% of MT)	Restricted (3-10% of MT)	Regional (11-50% of MT)	Widespread (50-70% of MT)	Very widespread (>70% of MT)
Trend in Population	Unknown	Rapid Decline (>50% in 20 yrs)	Decline (20% in 10 yrs)	Stable (natural fluctuation included)	Expansion	Rapid expansion
Trend in Distribution	Unknown	Rapid Contraction (>50% in 20 yrs)	Contraction (20% in 20 yrs)	Stable (natural fluctuations included)	Expansion	Rapid expansion
Threats to Population	Unknown	Extreme	High	Moderate	Limited	None
Threats to Habitat	Unknown	Extreme	High	Moderate	Limited	None

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Global ranks were also assigned to species by the NHP at the national level, with the following criteria used to assign and define Global Ranks:

- G1-Critically imperiled globally because of extreme rarity (typically less than 6 occurrences, less than 1,000 individuals or very few remaining acres) or because of some factor (s) making it especially vulnerable to extinction.
- G2-Imperiled globally because of extreme rarity (typically 6-20 occurrences, 1,000-3,000 individuals or few remaining acres) or because of some factor (s) making it very vulnerable to extinction throughout its range.
- G3-Rare or uncommon (typically 21-100 occurrences or 3,000-10,000 individuals) throughout its range, or found locally, even abundantly, in a restricted range (e.g., in a single state or physiographic region), or vulnerable to extinction throughout its range because of specific factors.
- G4-Widespread, abundant and apparently secure globally, though it may be quite rare in parts of its range, especially at the periphery (typically 101+ occurrences & 10,000+ individuals); some cause for long-term concern exists.
- G5-Demonstrably secure, widespread and abundant globally, although it may be quite rare in parts of its range, especially at the periphery.

Sensitive Species list review considerations depended upon the processes utilized by the NHP to rank species, and in most instances utilized ranks developed by the NHPs. If in the view of the Forest Service Technical Group sufficient and credible data existed/exists that would result in a rank different from that identified by the NHP, then an altered species rank could be utilized in the Sensitive Species process.

Step 2 Conclusion Statement: *The result of this step in the process was a starting review list of 487 wildlife species for which some concern for population reduction or viability was identified, within one or more of the States of ID, MT, SD, or ND, and State and Global NHP Ranks had been compiled for all (most) species.*

❖ **Ownership and Species Distribution:**

Only species, and/or their habitats, that occur on NF lands were considered for inclusion onto the Sensitive Species List.

Only species that occur as breeding or winter season residents were considered for inclusion onto the Sensitive Species List.

Transient/migratory species were not considered for inclusion onto the Sensitive Species List.

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Each Forest/Grassland was asked to review the starting review list and identify those species that were (1) Known to occur on the Unit (K), (2) Suspected to occur on the Unit (S), (3) Were migratory, did not breed or winter for extended periods of time on the Unit (T), (4) Were know to occur historically on the Unit, but not currently (HK), (5) Were suspected to occur historically on the Unit, but not currently (HS), and (6) Not known to occur, or to have occurred, on the Unit (blank or N).

The task group discussed species that could be affected from activities on FS lands, but that do not occur on FS lands. The example considered was coal-bed methane development and potential effects to downstream species. It was concluded that there could be impacts from this type of development on FS lands to species that reside off of FS lands.

Decision: The group felt that the type of example represents a relatively rare circumstance that could add quite a few species to the list, but that are not relevant to most FS projects. The decision was that additional species, species not otherwise on the list, would ***not*** be added to the Sensitive list to deal with this issue. But, rather that this type of situation should be dealt with during project analysis as a part of cumulative effects analysis.

Step 3 Conclusion Statement: *The result of this step in the process was a starting review list of 487 wildlife species for which some concern for population reduction or viability was identified, within one or more of the States of ID, MT, SD, or ND, and State and Global NHP Ranks had been compiled for all (most) species. In addition, an estimated seasonal distribution and occurrence on FS Units had been developed for each species.*

At this stage an initial cut was made to the starting review list to identify those species that did not rise to the level of concern, based upon Global or State Rank, and/or were not expected to occur as breeding or winter residents on FS Units. Species not meeting either the Rank or distribution criteria were proposed to not be carried further in the review process.

❖ Validation of NHP Ranks, Species Seasonal Use Patterns, and Species Distribution:

A review process was carried out with NHP personnel within each of the 4 States included in R1. The review included consideration of the entire 487 starting species review list, with validation of the identified State and Global Rank, a discussion of species distribution within the State and distribution on National Forest System lands, and the Rank and concern issues for species that were drawn from source lists other than the NHP. For species that NHP folks indicated concern, but that were not Ranked as G1-G3 or S1-S2, they were asked to review the species rank and change it, and/or outline which of the Ranking elements

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would/should cause the species to be further considered in the Sensitive Species review process.

Meetings were held with NHPs at the following locations, dates, and included the following individuals:

Montana NHP meeting was held in Helena MT on June 4, 2003, and in Missoula MT on August 8, 2003. Individuals in attendance at the Helena meeting included: NHP-John Carlson, and FS-Tom Wittinger, Sandy Kratville, Pat Sweeney, Don Godtel, Marion Cherry, Tom Whitford, Denise Pengeroth, **Art Rohrbacher (was he at this meeting???)**. Individuals in attendance at the Missoula meeting included NHP consultant Bryce Maxell, and Tom Wittinger of the FS. Additional written input was provided in a report from MT NHP "Status and Conservation Management of Terrestrial Mollusks of Special Concern in Montana" Paul Hendricks, June 2003.

Idaho NHP meeting was held in Grangeville ID on June 17, 2003. Individuals in attendance included: NHP-Kevin Church, Rex Salabanks, Chuck Harris, and FS-Tom Wittinger, and Steve Blair. Additional clarification/comment was provided by ID NHP Staff, George Stephens, concerning the status of the Marbled disc, and Northern alligator lizard (memo dated 7/29/03).

North Dakota NHP meeting was held in Dickinson ND on June 27, 2003. Individuals in attendance included: NHP-Kathy Duttonhefner and FS-Arden Warm. ND NHP Staff, Kathy Duttonhefner, provided additional clarification/comment and modification of some State Ranks for the Broad-winged skipper, Mulberry wing, Dion skipper, and Tawny crescent (memo dated 8/25/03).

South Dakota NHP meeting was held in Camp Crook SD on July 8, 2003. Individuals in attendance included: Doug Backlund of NHP and Alyssa Kiesow, SD Game, Fish and Parks-Shelly Deisch and Tom Whitford of the FS.

Comments were entered into the starting review species list for each State NHP, and provided back to NHP personnel for their review and correction. Follow-up changes to State Ranks, and/or suggested additional considerations for selected species, were included in final species evaluations.

Species that were included on the starting review list that originated from species lists other than the NHP were reviewed, including the Global and State Ranks, so that only similar at-risk species were included for Sensitive Species consideration as the review process moved forward. The NHP Rank criteria were utilized in determining whether or not a species from another source list should be carried forward in the review.

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Step 4 Conclusion Statement: *This step provides validation or correction to Global and State Rankings, seasonal use patterns, and distribution within the States and on FS lands. The starting review list was modified, with only those species meeting Rank and distribution criteria carried further in the review process, and considered for R1 Sensitive status. The table found in Appendix X captures all operations carried out in Steps 1-4.*

❖ **Risk Factors:**

Each species carried forward from Step 4 was screened to determine its risk from forest related management activities and/or control. Species for which appreciable risk factors were predicted, for either populations or habitats, was carried forward for consideration as a Sensitive Species. Those species for which no, or very limited risk, was identified were not carried forward. The attached list of risk elements, Attachment X, was developed by botanist in development of the 1999 Sensitive Species List, and with some modifications, additions, and deletions was adapted for use for wildlife species.

Step 5 Conclusion Statement: *The result of this step was a list of wildlife species that have met viability, distributional, and management risk process criteria, and therefore should be considered for management as R1 Sensitive Species.*

❖ **Additional Species Considerations:**

The application of Sensitive Species management occurs at the Forest Plan and project development scales, and has the objective of providing meaningful species considerations into these processes. Where basic information concerning species distribution and habitat use requirements is lacking, the utility of Sensitive Species listing is questionable. In addition, listing a species as Sensitive without adequate distribution or habitat use information places a management and analysis burden at the project level that can't be met.

Distributional and habitat information for species included in the mollusk wildlife group is generally limited, and can most efficiently be developed at a Regional scale. Therefore, species within this group were not proposed for inclusion to the Sensitive Species List, but rather efforts will focus upon the collection of distribution and habitat use information required for land management activities and decisions.

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Step 6 Conclusion Statement: The results of this step is to not list mollusk wildlife species on the Sensitive Species List at this time. The result of Steps 1-5 is a proposed R1 Sensitive Wildlife Species. The proposed Sensitive Species List, a list of species that were added to the 1999 Sensitive Species List, a list of species that were dropped from the 1999 Sensitive Species List, and a list of species that have a change in the area where considered Sensitive are found in Attachments x-x.

ATTACHMENTS

- 1) Draft Proposed Sensitive Species List
- 2) Species proposed to be added to the 1999 List
- 3) Species proposed to be dropped from the 1999 List
- 4) Species proposed for a change in area where Sensitive, relative to the 1999 List
- 5) Risk elements list
- 6) Starting review species list, Global and State Ranks, Source list origin, Unit and State distributions, and NHP review comments.