

ATTACHMENT SS2

REGION 2 SENSITIVE SPECIES EVALUATION FORM

Species: <i>Empidonax traillii</i> – Willow flycatcher			
Criteria	Rank	Rationale	Literature Citations
1 Distribution within R2	B	<p>Because it is closely tied to riparian and palustrine wetland shrub communities (especially willow), the species distribution is coincident with the distribution of those habitat types. These habitats are comparatively rare on the arid and semi-arid western landscape and, therefore, willow flycatcher populations are inherently patchy in R2. In Colorado and Wyoming, most breeding takes places in foothill and mountain valley locations. Because of the steep gradient prevalent on the east slope of the Rockies in Colorado, the majority of breeding sites are on the West Slope. In South Dakota, breeding is distributed most widely in the eastern half of the state.</p> <p>Confidence in Rank <b>High</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1,2,3,4,5</li> </ul>
2 Distribution outside R2	C	<p>The breeding range of this species is very widely distributed, though patchy, throughout much of North America. Winters in southern Mexico, Central America, and northern South America.</p> <p>Confidence in Rank <b>High</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1,2</li> </ul>
3 Dispersal Capability	D	<p>While I did not identify any information that specifically addressed dispersal capability, that capability is implied by its intercontinental migratory capability. The species long distance movement ability is unquestioned. Suitable breeding habitat is patchy and disjunct in places. Where riparian systems are largely intact, dispersal should be unimpeded. A number of human activities degrade or eliminate patches or segments of habitat, causing severe fragmentation of effective habitat, potentially impairing dispersal and population interaction. The degree to which the species will disperse across wide expanses or reaches of unsuitable habitat is not known.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1,2</li> </ul>
4 Abundance in R2	B	<p>Because of very patchy suitable habitat, the species is a somewhat uncommon and patchily distributed summer resident across R2. The species found where sufficient suitable riparian or palustrine shrub habitats persist. All but Kansas (S2?B) have S4 or S5 Heritage rankings. Still, species abundance is highly patchy, depending on the distribution of suitable habitat, and highly susceptible to habitat loss and degradation. The Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas states that surveyors found willow flycatchers in fewer habitat blocks than any other Empidonax species.</p> <p>Confidence in Rank <b>High</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1,2,3</li> </ul>

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<p><b>5</b> Population Trend in R2</p>	<p><b>A</b></p>	<p>BBS data have documented a substantial decline in the abundance of this species, particularly in the many areas of the Rocky Mountain and Intermountain West and Southwest. This decline is coincident with the decline and degradation of riparian and wetland shrub communities across the West. Because these habitat types are comparatively rare in the arid and semi-arid West, losses or degradation of these habitats have a disproportionately great effect on species populations. Too few occupied trend routes are available in Colorado to confirm a statistically valid trend. However, because of habitat declines a downward population trend is suspected.</p> <p>Confidence in Rank <b>High</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1,2,4</li> </ul>
<p><b>6</b> Habitat Trend in R2</p>	<p><b>A</b></p>	<p>Habitat has declined in many areas of R2 over the past century as a consequence of water development activities that alter hydrologic regimes of riparian systems, livestock grazing, invasion of exotics (especially Tamarisk) intentional control of wetland and riparian shrubs, and development. While that trend may be gradually improving on many NFS lands, the overall trend in many locations remains negative. Hydrological modification continues to occur, development in these habitats continues at an accelerating pace in many locations, and livestock grazing continues to be a problem.</p> <p>Confidence in Rank <b>High</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1</li> </ul>

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7 Habitat Vulnerability or Modification	B	<p>The willow flycatcher is intimately tied to riparian, and to a lesser extent palustrine, shrub communities, especially those of willow and alder. These communities are intricately tied to natural hydrological regimes. Because of the extensive development of limited water resources in the arid and semi-arid West, a majority of riparian systems and many palustrine systems have been subjected and continue to be subjected to hydrologic modification. While in some cases, such alteration has actually resulted in improved habitat or habitat expansion, in most cases, the native riparian or wetland shrub communities which develop from and are perpetuated by native hydrological regimes have suffered from their alteration. As human development continues to expand, this trend is only expected to deteriorate. As a consequence of hydrological modification, the Tamarisk continues to expand its range, outcompeting native shrub species, and degrading habitat quality. Livestock have heavily damaged and continue to damage many riparian and palustrine shrub communities. Grazing activity on and near breeding habitat causing direct damage to nest sites and nests, and increases and concentrates nest predation by cowbirds. Although that trend is improving on some federally management lands, degradation of these habitats continues in many places. The situation remains poor on many private lands. Ever-expanding human development also continues to degrade and consume riparian and wetland habitats.</p> <p>Confidence in Rank <b>High</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1</li> </ul>
8 Life History and Demographics	B	<p>This species is closely tied to riparian and some palustrine wetland shrub habitats. In turn, these habitats have been and continue to be heavily impacted by a variety of human activities, reducing and fragmenting them. Reproductive rate appears to be relatively high in quality habitat. In some areas, nest parasitism by cowbirds appears to be problematic, with demonstrated impacts on productivity.</p> <p>Confidence in Rank <b>High</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1,2,4</li> </ul>
Initial Evaluator(s): Gary Patton, R2			Date: 11/07/2001

National Forests in the Rocky Mountain Region where species is KNOWN (K) or LIKELY(L)<sup>1</sup> to occur:

<sup>1</sup> Likely is defined as more likely to occur than not occur on the National Forest or Grassland. This generally can be thought of as having a 50% chance or greater of appearing on NFS lands.

