

Region 2 Sensitive Species List

Common Hog-nosed Skunk (*Conepatus leuconotus*, *C. l. figginsi*)

Recommendation Rationale: **R2 Sensitive Species**

C. l. figginsi is an endemic to southeastern Colorado and the extreme western panhandle of Oklahoma (Cimmaron County). The next nearest known hognose skunk populations are in the Sandia Mountains of New Mexico. Prior to the discovery of a skull in the Wet Mountains west of Pueblo, Colorado in 2000, only 8 specimens from the 1920's were known from Colorado (Fremont, El Paso, and Baca counties). Dragoo and Honeycut 1995 and Fitzgerald et al 1994 state that the subspecies has not been documented since the 1920's or 1930's. Therefore, it is uncertain as to whether the subspecies still exists. However, the skull (no mandible) found in 2000 still had all upper teeth in place and retained tissue fragments on the inside of the cranial cavity. This seems to indicate that the skull may be only a few years old. That also is the opinion of N. Ryke and M Mellaci (USDA, Forest Service, PSICC). We requested and received an age estimate from the Denver Museum of Nature and Science, where the skull has been deposited for curation. It is their opinion that based on skull color, tightness of skull sutures, and the retention of tissue on the inside of the skull, that it is likely less than ten years old. The location of this find is approximately 3 miles southwest of Greenwood in Custer County, on the east flank of the Wet Mountains in the San Isabel National Forest. Rick Kahn (CDOW) also has a non-verified report of a hognose skunk trapped north of this site in adjacent Fremont County within the last few years. Because of the indemnity of the subspecies to southeastern Colorado and the Oklahoma panhandle, recent (though limited) evidence of possible persistence, the presence of this evidence on NFS lands, and its obvious rarity, the species appears to be well justified for Regional sensitive species status. There is insufficient information available to document population trend of this subspecies. Habitats, however, may be declining due to alteration of and development in shrublands and pinyon juniper woodlands along the Front Range. Certain management activities, including type conversion, fire and use of pesticides, may have the potential to negatively affect this subspecies. Because *figginsi* is the only subspecies found in R2, recommend the entire species for R2 sensitive species status, recognizing only the PSICC is affected. (Note: Originally, the apparent Fremont/El Paso and Baca County populations were considered distinct subspecies. Dragoo and Honeycut 1995, however, determined that they should be lumped as *C. l. figginsi*.)

Revised on January 13, 2003 by Gary Patton