

## R2 Sensitive Species List Recommendation

### **Smooth Greensnake (*Opheodrys vernalis*)**

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#### **Recommendation: R2 Sensitive Species**

**Rationale:** The species is widely distributed in R2, although suitable habitat and, therefore, population distribution is patchy and often disjunct. Habitat degradation and loss have resulted in highly dissociated populations in North America, including the West. The species is most common in Colorado and South Dakota, where it is apparently secure at this time. By contrast, it is ranked as imperiled in Wyoming and critically imperiled in Nebraska. Habitat for this species is generally lush herbaceous and shrubby growth associated with foothills and mountain riparian systems, wet meadows. In many areas, these habitats have been degraded by overgrazing, dewatering, development, and pollution. On private lands, such trends continue. Overgrazing and hydrological modifications are likely the principal potential threats on NFS lands.

Because of the patchy, often disjunct distribution of this species, its dependence on lush, well-developed riparian and wetland vegetation communities, and the potential importance of NFS lands to this species in light of continued habitat loss and degradation off system lands, we recommend this species be given some management emphasis within the Forest Service.

But how? Questions/Considerations:

Does it rise to the level justifying region-wide SS status? The condition and vulnerability of the species in R2 is quite variable.

Should it be treated as a species of local management concern where disjunct and vulnerable populations are known? W/o SS status, how likely is the identification and protection of vulnerable populations?

Would the spp. make a good MIS candidate? It is closely tied to lush, well developed riparian vegetation. But it may be hard to survey and monitor ?

Note: In addition to the evaluator's references, also referred to biodiversity documentation at Natureserve.com,; distribution data from the Colorado Herpetological Society; and Collins and Collins (1991) *Reptiles and Amphibians of the Cimarron National Grasslands, Morton County, Kansas*.

