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Nevada Division of Forestry
2478 Fairview Drive
Carson City NV 89701
by email to Rich Harvey at rharvey@forestry.nv.gov

RE: Proposed listing of Las Vegas buckwheat (*Eriogonum corymbosum* var. *nilesii*) as a Critically Endangered Plant Species

Dear Mr. Harvey,

This letter is in response to the notice of intent to act upon a regulation to add the Las Vegas buckwheat (*Eriogonum corymbosum* var. *nilesii*) to the Nevada list of critically endangered plant species.

General Status: The Las Vegas buckwheat (*Eriogonum corymbosum* var. *nilesii*) has recently been identified as a valid taxon by Reveal (2004), specifically as a genetically unique subspecies found in Clark County and Lincoln County. This species has a very restricted range and populations of the Las Vegas buckwheat are mostly in isolated areas with soils specific to the requirement of the species and mostly containing gypsum.

Population threats and risks: Based on current available data, about 70% of the estimated known historic populations have been either extirpated or are expected to be lost in the very near future (Morefield, 2007). The remaining Las Vegas buckwheat populations are at risk, with the exception of the population in the Muddy Mountains Wilderness (Lovell Wash). Threats and risks include natural or man-made factors affecting this species survival, from development in the Las Vegas Valley and rural areas of Clark County and Lincoln County, parks and flood control basin, OHV recreation, potential fires, invasive species, mining, and a potential railroad and power plant in the Toquop Wash area.

Protection Status: Historically the Nevada Division of Forestry failed to list this species despite repeated requests in 2001, 2002, and 2003 by the Nevada Rare Plant Workshop group. In 2006, the Nevada Rare Plant Workshop asked NDF to reconsider adding this species to the list of fully protected species under NAC chapter 527.010. Again, NDF issued a notice not to list this species.

Until the recent US Fish and Wildlife Service status review of the Las Vegas buckwheat, and listing as a Federal Candidate Species, there was virtually no protection. Under the

Clark County MSHCP, the Las Vegas buckwheat is listed as an evaluation species, a status that does not afford protection.

Despite limited known occurrences on private lands, a State listing is still critically important since the Endangered Species Act, section 9 prohibition on “take” are significantly different for plants than for wildlife. Hence, State listing adds a much needed measure of regulatory protection for the Las Vegas buckwheat, as we have seen with the Las Vegas bearpoppy (*Arctomecon californica*), a State critically endangered species.

Mitigation measures: A recovery plan will be needed after State listing. The plan should include ways to protect the species, and develop conservation measures with Nellis AFB, the USFWS, the BLM, and other entities. While transplanting the species is often proposed as a measure to mitigate, it is not a long-term solution. The success rate of transplants on a long-term basis is unknown, and not always successful on a short-term basis. Essentially, Las Vegas buckwheat as a potted plant is not a solution. We need viable populations of naturally reproducing plants, living on their own without man’s interference.

Conclusion: To conclude my comments, I urge NFD to list the Las Vegas buckwheat as a critically endangered species. NDF needs to keep in mind that it is not possible to reverse extinction, but it is better to save first than act too late.

Sincerely,

Hermi D. Hiatt
(via email)

References

Reveal J.L., 2004. New entities in Eriogonum (Polygonaceae: Eriogonoidaeae). *Phytologia* 86: 121-159.

Morefield J.D., 2007. Population status of Las Vegas buckwheat (*Eriogonum corymbosum* var. *nilesii*) based on 2006-2007 data. Letter to NDF on 24 September 2007.