

Wildlife, Fisheries, and Special Status Species



Background Information

The Royal Gorge Field Office (RGFO) supports a variety of plants, fish, and wildlife, including birds, small mammals, big game, carnivores, and reptiles. Dominant vegetation types in the planning area include tall and low shrublands, grassland, woodland, forest, and riparian/aquatic. High-priority wildlife species (due to their economic value, regulatory status, high public interest, or other qualities) within the RGFO are upland game birds, migratory birds, raptors, bighorn sheep, black bear, elk, mountain lion, pronghorn, and bats.

According to the US Fish and Wildlife Service, there are 20 federally listed threatened, endangered or proposed wildlife and plant species potentially occurring in or affected by actions within the planning area:

- Black-footed ferret, Endangered
- Canada lynx, Threatened
- Colorado butterfly plant, Threatened
- Greenback cutthroat trout, Threatened
- Least Tern (interior population), Endangered
- Lesser prairie-chicken, Threatened
- Mexican spotted owl, Threatened
- New Mexico meadow jumping mouse, Endangered
- North Park phacelia, Endangered
- Pallid sturgeon, Endangered
- Pawnee montane skipper, Threatened
- Penland alpine fen mustard, Threatened
- Piping plover, Threatened
- Preble's meadow jumping mouse, Threatened
- Southwestern willow flycatcher, Endangered
- Uncompahgre fritillary butterfly, Endangered
- Ute ladies'-tresses orchid, Threatened
- Western prairie fringed orchid, Threatened
- Whooping crane, Endangered
- Yellow-billed cuckoo, Threatened

The BLM identified 37 Sensitive Species that are known to occur or potentially occur in the planning area. This list considered State of Colorado endangered, threatened, and special status species and plant species ranked as critically imperiled or imperiled by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program. It includes all delisted and candidates for listing under the Endangered Species Act for a 5 year period.

Declining populations, the quality and quantity of reproductive, winter and foraging habitats and associated changes in composition and size of plant and animal assemblages are concerns for future management of wildlife, fisheries, and special status species. Small populations or rare species and their associated habitats are at higher risk for declines. As demand for use of public lands increases, these trends are likely to continue into the future. Oil, gas, coal, and solar resources, along with energy-related projects, have the potential to impact the species' reproductive, foraging, or winter habitats and populations. Other uses such as livestock grazing, water use, realty actions, and recreation could also have impacts. Streams could potentially be affected by development activities, resulting in increased sedimentation and changes in water quality and aquatic habitat.





Potential Decisions:

Wildlife, fisheries, and special species status management planning as part of the Eastern Colorado RMP/EIS may:

- Identify priority fish, wildlife, and plant species and habitats, in addition to special status species, that would be recognized as important indicators or representative species for specific habitat types and considered as part of management decisions
- Identify key habitats and actions needed that would improve viability of special status species and fish, wildlife, and plant species of interest
- Identify desired future conditions, goals and objectives for wildlife, fisheries, and/or special status species, including the quality and quantity of habitat, population sizes and other factors that allow fish, wildlife and plants of interest to persist and thrive in the planning area
- Identify actions and area-wide use restrictions needed to achieve desired population and habitat conditions in certain locations, under certain circumstances, and based on management actions and proposals, while also maintaining a natural ecological balance and allowing for multiple uses
- Identify specific measures to conserve and enhance essential fish, wildlife, and plant populations, as well as their key habitats
- Identify ecological factors that support healthy fish, wildlife and plant populations, such as plant diversity, a wide array of flowering plants, insect and pollinator diversity, and vegetation structure

Planning Issues:

- How can the BLM eliminate or mitigate threats to fisheries, wildlife, and special status species?
- Where and what kind of restoration actions are needed to maintain fish, wildlife and plant populations and their key habitats?
- What additional information should be acquired, and what population monitoring efforts should be implemented in order to improve conservation efforts?
- What trends and likely future conditions are important to consider when discussing future aquatic habitat, plant, and wildlife management considerations?
- What management actions are needed to protect fish, plant and wildlife populations from diseases, drought, large scale severe fires, other natural events, or loss of key habitats?

Tell Us What You Think!

If you have input on these topics, please share it with us in a scoping comment.

1. Are there additional fish, plant or wildlife ideas or concerns that should be covered in the EIS?
2. Are there BLM-administered lands in the planning area that require management actions to conserve or enhance fish, plant and wildlife diversity or improve their key habitats?
3. Can you recommend sources of information that should be used in the RMP/EIS?

Please submit your comments and other information via email to ECRMP.comments@blm.gov