

CANDIDATE ASSESSMENT AND LISTING PRIORITY ASSIGNMENT FORM

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Festuca ligulata*

COMMON NAME: Guadalupe fescue

LEAD REGION: Region 2

INFORMATION CURRENT AS OF: Feb. 2003

STATUS/ACTION (Check all that apply):

New candidate

Continuing candidate

Non-petitioned

Petitioned - Date petition received: July, 1975

90-day positive - FR date:

12-month warranted but precluded - FR date:

Is the petition requesting a reclassification of a listed species?

Listing priority change

Former LP:

New LP:

Latest date species first became a Candidate: July 1, 1975

Candidate removal: Former LP:  (Check only one reason)

A - Taxon more abundant or widespread than previously believed or not subject to a degree of threats sufficient to warrant issuance of a proposed listing or continuance of candidate status.

F - Range is no longer a U.S. territory.

M - Taxon mistakenly included in past notice of review.

N - Taxon may not meet the Act's definition of *Species*.@

X - Taxon believed to be extinct.

ANIMAL/PLANT GROUP AND FAMILY: Plant, Poaceae

HISTORICAL STATES/TERRITORIES/COUNTRIES OF OCCURRENCE: Texas (possibly New Mexico and Mexico)

CURRENT STATES/COUNTIES/TERRITORIES/COUNTRIES OF OCCURRENCE: Texas (possibly New Mexico and Mexico)

LEAD REGION CONTACT: Susan Jacobsen (505) 248-6641

LEAD FIELD OFFICE CONTACT: Austin, Texas Field Office, Charmaine Delmatier, 512-490-0057

BIOLOGICAL INFORMATION (Describe habitat, historic vs. current range, historic vs. current population estimates (# populations, #individuals/population), etc.):

The only known U.S. population (which has fluctuated from 51 to several hundred individuals) is in Big Bend National Park. Historically this fescue was reported in the Guadalupe Mountains as well, but has not been relocated there. There are no historical population estimates. There are two historical records and two known extant populations in Coahuila, Mexico. In both Mexico and the U.S., plants are found scattered in patches in the dense understory of pine-oak-juniper woodlands around 5,000ft. Additional attempts to relocate the Guadalupe Mts. population, in the U.S., are planned for this summer, 2003, by Joe Sirotnak, Botanist, Big Bend National Park (BBNP).

THREATS:

A. The present or threatened destruction, modification, or curtailment of its habitat or range.

The single known U. S. population is bisected by a trail and subject to occasional trampling by horses and hikers. Prior trail construction may have reduced the population area by up to 25%. New trails are planned that may affect this species, but plans have not been finalized. There is some concern that this species may be successional following fire or other disturbance, and that the suppression or reduced incidence of this disturbance has resulted in the reduction of areas of suitable habitat for the species. This fescue may be dependent on periodic light fire and may require active management to persist. The type locality, from the Guadalupe Mts., has not been relocated since 1952. Hence, the only observed population in the U.S. is located at Big Bend NP, and adjacent to a prescribed burn area, as proposed in the park=s draft fire management plan. The effects of fire on individuals are yet unknown. It is also possible that a catastrophic fire could extirpate the only known U.S. population which is in BBNP. We are beginning discussion with BBNP to incorporate protection measures should a prescribed burn escape its boundaries.

B. Overutilization for commercial, recreational, scientific, or educational purposes.  
None known.

C. Disease or predation.

The seeds are known to occasionally have a fungus but it has not been observed to reach levels that appear a serious threat to the known population.

D. The inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms.

This species is not State-listed. Theoretically, the National Park Service should manage all species on their lands, in accordance with the Park Service=s Organic Act, but no regulatory prohibitions against impacts are in place.

E. Other natural or manmade factors affecting its continued existence.

Low population numbers and restriction to a single known population make this species vulnerable to extinction from catastrophic local events or because of reduced genetic viability that may render the species less adaptive to adverse change in its environment.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR REMOVAL OR LISTING PRIORITY CHANGE:  
N/A

FOR RESUBMITTED PETITIONS: N/A

- a. Is listing still warranted? Y
- b. To date, has publication of a proposal to list been precluded by other higher priority listing actions? Y
- c. Is a proposal to list the species as threatened or endangered in preparation? N
- d. If the answer to c. above is no, provide an explanation of why the action is still precluded: Since publication of the 2002 CNOR, the publication of a proposed rule to list this species has been precluded by other higher priority listing actions, and based on work scheduled we expect that will remain the case for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2004. Almost the entire national listing budget has been consumed by work on various listing actions taken to comply with court orders and court-approved settlement agreements, emergency listing, and essential litigation-related, administrative, and program management functions. We will continue to monitor the status of E. ligulata as new information becomes available. This review will determine if a change in status is warranted, including the need to make prompt use of emergency listing procedures.

LAND OWNERSHIP (Estimate proportion Federal/state/local government/private, identify non-private owners):

The only known existing site is in Big Bend National Park. In addition, a historical population that has not been relocated occurred in Guadalupe Mountains National Park, New Mexico.

PRELISTING (Describe status of conservation agreements or other conservation activities):

Big Bend National Park and the Fish and Wildlife Service signed a conservation agreement in 1998. However, the National Park Service has not had an opportunity to implement any of the measures outlined in the agreement, but it is a high priority for the Park (J. Serotnik, Botanist, Big Bend National Park, pers. comm. 2001).

REFERENCES:

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Unpublished monitoring data.

Poole, J. 1989. Status survey on *Festuca ligulata*. Texas Natural Heritage Program, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Unpublished report. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Austin Ecological Services Field Office.

Texas Plant Recovery Team recommendations, 1990 and 1992.

Conservation Agreement for *Castilleja elongata* (Tall Paintbrush) and *Festuca ligulata* (Guadalupe Fescue). 1998. Signed between Big Bend National Park and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Unpublished. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Austin Ecological Services Field Office.

## LISTING PRIORITY

THREAT
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Magnitude	Immediacy	Taxonomy	Priority	
High	Imminent	Monotypic genus	1	
		Species	2	
		Subspecies/population	3	
	Non-imminent	Non-imminent	Monotypic genus	4
			Species	5
			Subspecies/population	6
Moderate to Low	Imminent	Monotypic genus	7	
		Species	8	
		Subspecies/population	9	
	Non-imminent	Non-imminent	Monotypic genus	10
			Species	11 *
			Subspecies/population	12

**Rationale for listing priority number:**

*Magnitude:* Currently there is only one population known to occur in the U.S., located at BBNP. There is a 1998 conservation agreement between BBNP and the USFWS, but this does not remove the need to list. Over a ten-year period, 1993-2002, monitoring data have revealed that numbers have steadily declined at Big Bend NP. The type locality, in Guadalupe Mts., has not been collected since 1952 (by Hubert H. Nixon) and may be extinct at that location. The status of the two populations in Mexico, that occur on private land, is unknown. In both the U.S. and Mexico, individuals are uncommon, scattered, and scarce. Even though there is only one U.S. population, it does occur on protected National Park land, hence the magnitude has been considered moderate to low. We will be assessing the magnitude of threat posed by fire.

*Imminence:* There is uncertainty whether it is a fire dependent plant species. A catastrophic fire could extirpate the only known population in the U.S. There is a proposed prescribed burn adjacent to the population. The Austin ESO is beginning discussions with BBNP to secure the population from impact.

APPROVAL/CONCURRENCE: Lead Regions must obtain written concurrence from all other Regions within the range of the species before recommending changes to the candidate list, including listing priority changes; the Regional Director must approve all such recommendations. The Director must concur on all additions of species to the candidate list, removal of candidates, and listing priority changes.

Approve: Tom Bauer March 14, 2003  
Acting Regional Director, Fish and Wildlife Service Date

Concur: Steve Williams April 5, 2004  
Director, Fish and Wildlife Service Date

Do not concur: \_\_\_\_\_  
Director, Fish and Wildlife Service Date

Director's Remarks:

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Date of annual review: Feb. 2003

Conducted by: Charmaine Delmatier

Comments:

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(rev. 6/00)