

CANDIDATE ASSESSMENT AND LISTING PRIORITY ASSIGNMENT FORM

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Paronychia congesta*

COMMON NAME: Bushy whitlow-wort

LEAD REGION: Region 2

INFORMATION CURRENT AS OF: February 2003

STATUS/ACTION (Check all that apply):

New candidate

Continuing candidate

Non-petitioned

Petitioned - Date petition received: _____

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: _____

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 a species. @

X - Taxon believed to be extinct.

ANIMAL/PLANT GROUP AND FAMILY: Plant, Caryophyllaceae

HISTORICAL STATES/TERRITORIES/COUNTRIES OF OCCURRENCE: Texas

CURRENT STATES/ COUNTIES/TERRITORIES/COUNTRIES OF OCCURRENCE: Jim
Hogg County, Texas

LEAD REGION CONTACT: Susan Jacobsen, 1-505-248-6641

LEAD FIELD OFFICE CONTACT: (Corpus Christi, TX Field Office, Allan Strand,
1-361-994-9005

BIOLOGICAL INFORMATION: *Paronychia congesta* occurs in full sun in openings in blackbrush shrublands, growing in shallow soils on xeric caliche or calcareous outcrops on the Borden Escarpment. This species is endemic to Jim Hogg County, Texas (Damude and Poole 1990). The bushy whitlow-wort is known from two sites classified as Zapata soils and characterized as well-drained, calcareous, shallow soils with a low available water capacity forming over caliche (Sanders *et al.* 1974). In the late 1980's other suitable sites were surveyed but only the two small populations were located on two separate ranches (Damude and Poole 1990).

THREATS (Describe threats in terms of the five factors in section 4 of the ESA providing specific, substantive information:

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

Threats to the habitat of this species include destruction, modification, and fragmentation. Habitat destruction results from activities such as conversion of native plant communities to improved pasture; increased petroleum and gas exploration, production, and transportation; and highway and infrastructure improvements. Modification of habitat is due to chemical and mechanical brush clearing and the introduction of non-native grasses, such as buffel grass (*Pennisetum ciliaris*). Habitat fragmentation results from blading, discing and re-seeding with exotic erosion-control seed mixtures.

Herbicides on highway, utility, and pipeline rights-of-way are another impact contributing to the destruction of the species and its habitat. A potential impact could be ~~Amining~~ or removal of caliche for use in road building activities. Sanders *et al.* (1974) stated that the soils where this species lives are suitable as a source of caliche, although rangeland is currently the primary land use on these Zapata soils. Highway improvement and new construction have intensified across South Texas in response to trade opportunities associated with the North American Free Trade Agreement and this poses a threat to this plant.

B. Overutilization for commercial, recreational, scientific, or educational purposes.

None known

C. Disease or predation.

Grazing or browsing has not been observed, but the possibility exists that this species could be threatened by grazing since it is unprotected by thorns or spines and is apparently not aromatic (Damude and Poole 1990). According to Turner (1983), the type of locality in which this plant species occurs was intensively grazed by goats in the past and continues to be grazed by cattle.

D. The inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms.

This species is not currently protected by either Federal or State regulations.

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

This plant's restricted range and probable reduced genetic variability leave it vulnerable to extirpation and, ultimately, extinction.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR REMOVAL OR LISTING PRIORITY CHANGE:

FOR RECYCLED PETITIONS: N/A

- a. Is listing still warranted?
- b. To date, has publication of a proposal to list been precluded by other higher priority listing actions?
- c. Is a proposal to list the species as threatened or endangered in preparation?
- d. If the answer to c. above is no, provide an explanation of why the action is still precluded.

LAND OWNERSHIP: Known populations occur on private land.

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

A status report on *P. congesta* (Turner 1983) documented the author's relocation of the type locality and clarified the taxonomy of the genus *Paronychia* in Texas. Damude and Poole (1990) completed a revised status report in December, 1990. This report gave further information regarding biological vulnerability and threats and supports the preparation of a proposed rule to list bushy whitlow-wort as endangered.

REFERENCES

Damude, N. and J. Poole. 1990. Revised Status Report on *Paronychia congesta*. Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Texas Natural Heritage Program, Austin, Texas.

Elliott, L. 1995. Personal Communication. Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Resource Protection Division.

Sanders, R.R., C.M. Thompson, D. Williams, and J. L. Jacobs. 1974. Soil Survey of Jim Hogg County, Texas. U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Turner, B. L. 1983. Status report on *Paronychia congesta*. U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

LISTING PRIORITY (place * after number)

THREAT

Magnitude	Immediacy	Taxonomy	Priority
-----------	-----------	----------	----------

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

Rationale for listing priority number: No new imminent threats have been identified for this species. The habitat located on private land is still being used for ranching, although no high level of disturbance has occurred with these activities, thus the threats are considered non-imminent and of a moderate to low magnitude. There are no additional threats that we are aware of beyond those identified in this form. Access to the property has been discouraged and we have no additional information that would support a change in the listing priority number for the bushy whitlow-wort.

Magnitude: Moderate to Low

Imminence: Non-imminent

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: _____
Director, Fish and Wildlife Service Date

Do not concur: _____
Director, Fish and Wildlife Service Date

Director's Remarks:

-
-

Date of annual review: Feb. 2003
Conducted by: Loretta Pressly/Robyn Cobb

Comments:

-
-

(rev. 7/02)