

CANDIDATE ASSESSMENT AND LISTING PRIORITY ASSIGNMENT FORM

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Penstemon debilis*

COMMON NAME: Parachute Beardtongue

LEAD REGION: 6

INFORMATION CURRENT AS OF: January, 2003

STATUS/ACTION:

New candidate

Continuing candidate

Non-petitioned

Petitioned - Date petition received: ____

90-day positive--FR date: ____

12-month warranted but precluded--FR date: ____

Listing priority change

 Former LP: ____

 New LP: ____

Latest date species first became a Candidate: Februar 28, 1996

Candidate removal: Former LP: ____

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 ESA=s definition of "species."

X - Taxon believed to be extinct.

ANIMAL/PLANT GROUP AND FAMILY: *Scrophulariaceae*

HISTORICAL STATES/TERRITORIES/COUNTRIES OF OCCURRENCE: Colorado.

CURRENT STATES/COUNTIES/TERRITORIES/COUNTRIES OF OCCURRENCE:
Colorado.

LEAD REGION CONTACT: Chuck Davis, (303) 236-7400, extension 235

LEAD FIELD OFFICE CONTACT: Terry Ireland, (970) 243-2778, Grand Junction, Colorado.

BIOLOGICAL INFORMATION:

The Parachute beardtongue grows on steep, white shale talus at 2,500 meters (2,700 yards) in

elevation on the southern escarpment of Mount Callahan, above the Colorado River west of the town of Parachute, Colorado. The total known range is about 90 hectares (220 acres). It is restricted to the Parachute Creek Member of the Green River Formation in the Piceance Basin. This geological stratum is the major source of oil shale in the United States and this species is one of several oil shale endemic plant species.

The Parachute beardtongue is known from two locations--one composed of approximately 100 individuals, the other approximately 1,000 individuals. The Green River Formation is fairly widespread in the Piceance Basin and has been extensively searched. However, additional populations of this species have not been discovered. Details of the species' life history are unknown.

THREATS:

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

This species is threatened by destruction of its habitat for oil shale production or other energy development. Although oil shale and energy development is not progressing at the present time due to economic considerations, the economic climate could change at any time making such projects financially viable. The largest of the two populations occurs on land owned by Occidental Oil. The other population occurs on Naval Oil Shale Reserve property. Since the species' discovery, The Nature Conservancy has attempted, without success, to negotiate with Occidental Oil for protective status for occupied habitat. Negotiations have been suspended due to lack of progress. The Naval Oil Shale Reserve is managed for energy production with ongoing exploration (test wells) for oil and gas. The property was recently surveyed for rare species in preparation for changes in ownership and management. Proposed alternatives for changes in management include, among others, selling to private parties and full development by the Department of Defense for oil.

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

None known.

C. Disease or predation.

None known.

D. The inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms.

Parachute beardtongue has little or no Federal regulatory protection at either of its two known locations. There are no State regulations that protect rare plant species in Colorado.

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

Other than randomly occurring natural events, none known.

FOR RECYCLED PETITIONS: N/A.

LAND OWNERSHIP: Of the two known populations, one is privately owned by Occidental Oil, the other is federally owned as one of several Naval Oil Shale Reserves. Disposition of the Naval Oil Shale Reserves has been proposed, and its ownership and management status is unknown at this time.

There have been extensive surveys for rare plants in oil shale substrates throughout the Piceance Basin. Additional locations of Parachute beardtongue have not been discovered. This species appears to be an extremely rare edaphic endemic that occurs on a substrate at high risk for destruction.

The level of threat will change from nonimminent to imminent if mining is initiated in the habitat. If the Fish and Wildlife Service waits until increased mining activity takes place or until the land passes into private ownership, the species will likely be extirpated.

PRELISTING: Negotiations for conservation agreements have not been successful for this species.

There was no monitoring, research, or other prelisting conservation activities conducted for the Parachute beardtongue in 2001. Consequently, there is no information to suggest or refute removing the species from the candidate list nor changing the listing priority. Therefore, the Parachute beardtongue should be retained at a listing priority of five.

REFERENCES:

O'Kane, S.L., Jr., and J.L. Anderson. 1987. *Penstemon debilis* (*Scrophulariaceae*): a new species from Colorado endemic to oil shale. *Brittonia* 39(4):412-416.

Colorado Natural Heritage Program and Colorado Natural Areas Program data files, including personal conversation with J.L. Anderson.

LISTING PRIORITY

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:

Magnitude:

Imminence:

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: Ralph O. Morgenweck
Regional Director, Fish and Wildlife Service

April 1, 2003
Date

Concur: _____
Director, Fish and Wildlife Service

Date

Do not concur: _____
Director, Fish and Wildlife Service

Date

Director's Remarks:

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