

CANDIDATE ASSESSMENT AND LISTING PRIORITY ASSIGNMENT FORM

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Penstemon scariosus* var. *albifluvis*

COMMON NAME: White River beardtongue

LEAD REGION: 6

INFORMATION CURRENT AS OF: February 11, 2003

STATUS/ACTION:

New candidate

Continuing candidate

Non-petitioned

Petitioned--Date petition received: November 2, 1983 (second petition)

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:: 1983

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: Flowering plants - *Scrophulariaceae*

HISTORICAL STATES/TERRITORIES/COUNTRIES OF OCCURRENCE: Colorado, Utah

CURRENT STATES/COUNTIES/TERRITORIES/COUNTRIES OF OCCURRENCE:

Colorado - Rio Blanco County; Utah - Uintah County

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

LEAD FIELD OFFICE CONTACT: Salt Lake City, UT, Larry England, (801) 975-3330 x138

BIOLOGICAL INFORMATION: The White River penstemon is restricted to calcareous soils derived from oil shale barrens of the Green River Formation in the Uinta Basin of northeastern Utah and adjacent Colorado. The species range is composed of an arc of small scattered populations from the vicinity of Raven Ridge near the White River in Rio Blanco County, Colorado, then westward into southern Uintah County, Utah to the vicinity of Evacuation Creek,

a distance of about 20 miles (30 kilometers). The population is estimated at about 20,000 individuals with about 95 percent occurring in Utah. The species was described in the early 1980's, and little is known about the life history. The plant is a perennial that is probably moderately long-lived, and blooms during late May to early June. There are currently three known populations, but the historical range prior to the species description in the early 1980's is unknown.

THREATS:

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

All of the occupied habitat of the White River penstemon is within developed and expanding oil and gas fields. Several wells and access roads are within the species' occupied habitat. The location of the species' habitat on public lands exposes it to destruction from off-road vehicle use, and road, pipeline, and well site construction in connection with oil and gas development. With such a small population and limited occupied habitat, any destruction, modification, or curtailment of the habitat would have a highly negative impact on the species. Virtually every population is associated with high grade oil bearing strata of the Evacuation Creek Member of the Green River Formation (i.e., the Mahogany Zone). If commercial oil shale recovery becomes a reality, maintenance of most populations would be very difficult. However, current economic considerations make the expansion of oil shale recovery unlikely in the foreseeable future.

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

None known.

C. Disease or predation.

The species is palatable to wildlife and livestock, and overgrazing of public lands may be a major reason for the species' restricted range. The species is also vulnerable to livestock trampling because it occurs in public grazing allotments.

D. The inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms.

No Federal or State laws or regulations specifically protect *P. scariosus* var. *albifluvis*. The Bureau of Land Management administratively recognizes this species for special management consideration, but does not have the legal authority to require Federal mineral lease holders to modify their mineral recovery plans and on-the-ground actions solely to protect this species. Many populations occur on private lands patented for oil shale mining. These populations have no protection.

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

None known.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR REMOVAL OR LISTING PRIORITY CHANGE:

N/A

FOR RESUBMITTED PETITIONS:

- a. Is listing still warranted? Yes
- b. To date, has publication of a proposal to list been precluded by other higher priority listing actions? Yes
- c. Is a proposal to list the species as threatened or endangered in preparation? No
- 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 the White River penstemon 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: Land ownership of the species habitat is a mosaic of Federal, State of Utah, and private lands. About 60 percent of the species population occurs on public lands managed by BLM. About 40 percent occurs on State of Utah and private lands.

PRELISTING: The Bureau of Land Management is funding an extensive survey and life history studies on this plant that will start this Fiscal Year.

REFERENCES:

- Cronquist, A., A.H. Holmgren, N.H. Holmgren, J.L. Reveal, P.K. Holmgren. 1984. Intermountain Flora, Vascular Plants of the Intermountain West, U.S.A., Volume Four Subclass *Asteridae* (except *Asteraceae*). The New York Botanical Garden, Bronx, New York. 573 pp.
- England, J.L. 1982. A New Species of *Penstemon* (*Scrophulariaceae*) from the Uinta Basin of Utah and Colorado. *Great Basin Nat.* 42:367-368.
- Neese, E., and F. Smith. 1982. Threatened and Endangered Plant Inventory for the Oil Shale RMP, Bookcliffs Resource Area, Utah. Unpublished status report on file with the Bureau of Land Management, Vernal, Utah. 89 pp. + appendices.
- Welsh, S.L., N.D. Atwood, S. Goodrich, and L.C. Higgins. 1993. A Utah Flora, Second Edition, revised. Brigham Young University Press, Provo, Utah. 986 pp.

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: Most of the occupied habitat of *P. s. albifluvis* is within developed and expanding oil and gas fields with several wells and access roads within the species' occupied habitat. The location of *P. s. albifluvis* habitat exposes it to possibility of habitat destruction from off-road vehicle (ORV) use, road, pipeline, and well site construction in connection with oil and gas development. With such a small population and limited occupied habitat, any destruction, modification, or curtailment of the habitat would have a highly negative impact on the species.

Imminence: The more intense threats to this species until recently were not imminent. They are however becoming a distinct possibility. In the near future those threats will likely become acute. Even though the species is in part sympatric with *P. grahamii*, the more imminent threats from oil and gas development and potential exchanges of occupied habitat for State lands elsewhere in Utah, are to the west of the habitat of *P. s. albifluvis*, and within the remainder of the range of *P. grahamii*. The Salt Lake Field Office will evaluate the mounting threats to this species during 2003.

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, annual retentions of candidates, removal of candidates, and listing priority changes.

Approve: Ralph O. Morgenweck April 1, 2003
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:

Date of annual review: March 20, 2003

Conducted by: Larry England

Comments: _____

