

**File Code:** 2670**Date:** JUL 21 2015**Route To:** 1930**Subject:** Updated Regional Forester's Special Status Species List**To:** Region 6 Forest Supervisors

This letter officially updates the Regional Forester's Special Status Species (RFSSS) list, which includes federally threatened, endangered and proposed, and Region 6 sensitive and strategic species (Enclosure 1). Collectively, these species are referred to as "Special Status Species." The updated list reflects comments received from Forest Supervisors in response to the December 18, 2014, (2670/1950) letter requesting review of the draft updated list.

The Interagency Special Status/Sensitive Species Program (ISSSSP) and development of the Special Status Species list are proactive approaches for meeting our obligations under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), the National Forest Management Act, and our National policy as stated in Forest Service Manual (FSM) 2670 and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Regulation 9500-4. The primary policy objectives are to recover federally listed and proposed species and, for sensitive species, to ensure that actions do not contribute to a loss of viability or cause a significant trend toward listing under the ESA. The effects of any action authorized, funded, or carried out by the Forest Service on a federally listed, federally proposed, or sensitive species will be analyzed in a Biological Evaluation or project NEPA analysis.

Strategic species are **not** considered "sensitive" under FSM 2670 and do not need to be addressed in Biological Evaluations. Many strategic species are poorly known (i.e., distribution, habitat, threats, or taxonomy), so conservation status is unclear. ISSSSP staff in the Regional Office (RO) will coordinate with field units to compile information to improve understanding and clarify status of the strategic species. To this end, the only management direction for strategic species requires field units to record survey and locality information in the agency's corporate Natural Resource Information System (NRIS) databases (NRIS TESP for vascular plants, non-vascular plants and fungi; NRIS Wildlife for vertebrates, including amphibians, and invertebrates (aquatic and terrestrial); and NRIS Aquatic Surveys for fish).

The criteria for determining sensitive or strategic status for a species are attached (Enclosure 2). A minor change to the criteria was made (as noted in the 2670/1950 correspondence that transmitted the draft list, 12/18/2014) and is officially applied in this list update. Species with a "Q" rank (meaning taxonomic question) previously could not qualify as sensitive. In this list update, however, the Q rank is no longer disqualifying for potential sensitive species.

All enclosures are available for download from the ISSSSP website at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/sfpnw/issssp/agency-policy/>. The list will remain static until the next update (normally about three years), except for changes relating to ESA status. You will be notified whenever ESA-related changes are made (for example, if a species becomes federally proposed or listed as threatened or endangered), and these changes become effective immediately. Similarly, newly designated federal ESA candidate species are immediately considered sensitive throughout the region. For all federally listed, federally proposed and Region 6 sensitive and strategic species, each forest is responsible for tracking any changes in occurrence status (documented or suspected) on their unit and reporting those to RO staff. These changes become effective immediately for all relevant land management activities.



The updated RFSSS list (with the exception of strategic species) included in Enclosure 1 will apply to all projects initiated on or after the date of this letter. Projects initiated prior to the date of this letter may use the updated RFSSS list transmitted in this letter or the RFSSS list that was in effect when the project was initiated. For the purpose of this letter, "initiated" means that a signed, dated document such as a project initiation letter, scoping letter, or Federal Register Notice has been completed for the project.

Field units are still required to utilize the process established for identification and vouchering of bryophytes, lichens, fungi, invertebrates, and vascular plants. Specific information on how to package, label and mail vouchers is provided on the ISSSSP website at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/sfpnw/issssp/inventories/identification.shtml>.

If you have questions concerning information on the enclosed list or general questions about the ISSSSP, please contact Carol Hughes, 503-808-2661, John Chatel, 503-808-2673, or Mark Skinner, 503-808-2150. For National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) questions, please contact Jackie Andrew at 503-808-2464.



JM JAMES M. PEÑA
Regional Forester

Enclosures: (2)

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