Southern Plains Bumblebees/Endangered Species Act: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Grants Petition to Address Possible Endangered/Threatened Listing (Range Includes Arkansas)

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The United States Fish and Wildlife Service ("Service") announced on January 25th 90-day findings on 10 petitions to add species to the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants ("List") under the Endangered Species Act ("ESA").

One of the 10 species includes the Southern Plains bumblebee whose range includes the State of Arkansas.

Section 4 of the ESA in its implementing regulations in Title 50 of the Code of Federal Regulations set the procedures for adding species to, removing species from, or reclassifying species on the List.

The ESA requires that the Service make a determination on whether a petition to add a species to the list, remove a species from the list (i.e., "delist") or change a listed species' status from endangered to threatened or from threatened to endangered (i.e., reclassify) presents substantial specific or commercial information indicating that the petition to action may be warranted. This determination is required by the ESA to be made within 90 days of receipt of the petition.

A species may be determined to be an endangered species or threatened species because of one or more of the five factors described in Section 4(a)(1) of the ESA. The five factors are:

1. The present or threatened destruction, modification, or curtailment of its habitat or range (Factor A);
2. Overutilization for commercial, recreational, scientific, or educational purposes (Factor B);
3. Disease or predation (Factor C);
4. The inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms (Factor D); and
5. Other natural or manmade factors affecting its continued existence (Factor E)

The Service states that it searches for factors that may have a negative effect on individuals of the species and/or other actions or conditions that may ameliorate any negative effects or may have positive effects.

In the event that a petition is granted, the Service's review will evaluate identified threats by considering the individual-, population-, and species level effects and the expected response by the species.

The Service received a petition on July 27, 2021, from the Center for Biological Diversity requesting that the Southern Plains bumblebee be listed as an endangered species and critical habitat be designated.

The Service states in part that based on its review of the petition and readily available information regarding agricultural practices and pesticides use, that the petition presents substantial scientific or commercial information indicating listing the Southern Plains bumblebee as a threatened species or endangered species may be warranted.

The states referenced as constituting the species' range, in addition to Arkansas, include:

- Alabama
- Colorado
- Florida
- Georgia
- Illinois
- Iowa
- Kansas
- Kentucky
- Louisiana
- Mississippi
- Missouri
- Nebraska
- New Mexico
- California
- North Dakota
- Ohio
- Oklahoma
- South Carolina
- South Dakota
- Tennessee
- Texas
- Virginia
- Wyoming

A copy of the Service's prepublication Federal Register Notice can be downloaded here.