

North Platte River Drainage

Within the Glendo HUC, we have designated critical habitat on the Cottonwood Creek watershed consistent with the medium recovery population called for in our conservation strategy. Although we originally proposed critical habitat in the Horseshoe Creek watershed on National Forest System land, we have removed this unit from final designation after reevaluation of the available data regarding Preble's identification in this drainage. As indicated previously, we have decided to include in the critical habitat determination only those units occurring in drainages within which there is a specimen verified as Preble's through morphological or genetic means. The Horseshoe Creek has had no mice verified to be Preble's through morphological or genetic means, but rather only through field identification.

Within the Lower Laramie HUC, we have designated critical habitat on Chugwater Creek consistent with the large recovery population. Primary constituent elements required by the Preble's appear widespread within Chugwater Creek and its tributaries. Richeau Creek and Hunton Creek were not included as designated critical habitat since they are segregated from the main portion of the Chugwater Creek complex by long stretches of less suitable habitat. Upon review of additional information obtained through public comment and during site visits to the area, some adjustments were made to the tributaries proposed to be included in this unit. Four tributaries were removed from the final designation. These tributaries include two named Spring Creek, Threemile Creek, and Sand Creek. The Spring Creek located farthest downstream supports somewhat limited riparian vegetation, transitions immediately into arid uplands without adequately vegetation (rather than supporting meadows and hayfields like most of Chugwater Creek), and does not provide open water through the Preble's active season. This tributary is not be considered valuable in providing connectivity, as it does not link one area to another. Similarly, although Threemile Creek does flow through the Preble's active season, the riparian vegetation associated with this creek is extremely limited (only a few feet in width in some locations) and transitions immediately into arid uplands characterized by the presence of cacti and supporting only limited grasses and forbs. Sand Creek has reasonably well developed riparian vegetation, but does not regularly contain open, flowing

water. Water flows are restricted to periods after storm events. The Spring Creek occurring farthest upstream flows underground (with haying occurring across it) through significant portions of its reach. Although the upstream reach of the tributary has above-ground flows and adequate vegetation to be considered suitable habitat for the Preble's, the upper reaches are not connected to the lower reach or Chugwater Creek.

Also in the Lower Laramie HUC, habitat components typically used by the Preble's exist on Federal property on the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forest. While many of these locations are at higher elevations than those that the Preble's has been shown to inhabit, surveys have also captured jumping mice identified in the field as the Preble's from the appropriate elevational range. Therefore, we originally proposed critical habitat on National Forest System lands and small parcels of intervening non-Federal lands within the Friend Creek watershed and within the Murphy Canyon watershed. However, as discussed previously, we have removed the Friend Creek and Murphy Canyon unit from this designation, as those drainages contain no mice verified as Preble's through morphological or genetic means.

Within the Horse Creek HUC, we originally proposed critical habitat on Horse Creek consistent with the medium recovery population called for in our conservation strategy. However, for reasons discussed previously, we have removed the Horse Creek unit from this designation as the drainage contains no mice verified as Preble's through morphological or genetic means.

Our conservation strategy calls for three small populations or one medium population in both the Middle North Platte-Casper HUC and the Middle North Platte-Scottsbluff HUC. Suitable habitat appears to be present throughout the Middle North Platte-Casper HUC. However, survey efforts targeted at the Preble's have occurred on only a limited basis in this subdrainage, with the only known captures of jumping mice at elevations above 2,800 m (7,800 ft) and likely to be western jumping mice. Therefore, while primary constituent elements for the Preble's appear present in this subdrainage and the Preble's probably occurs within this system, we have not designated critical habitat based on lack of known occurrence.

Habitat components suitable for the Preble's appear to be quite limited in the Middle North Platte-Scottsbluff HUC and are largely confined to the westernmost portions of the subdrainage. Some small pockets of

suitable habitat are scattered throughout the rest of the subdrainage, but they are quite isolated. Additionally, trapping efforts targeted at the Preble's have occurred on a limited basis in this subdrainage with no surveys providing captures of the jumping mice. Therefore, while there is a high probability that the Preble's occurs within this subdrainage, we have not designated critical habitat based on lack of known occurrence.

South Platte River Drainage

Our conservation strategy calls for three small recovery populations or one medium population in the Upper Lodgepole HUC. Suitable habitat for the Preble's is generally limited to the western half of the subdrainage. Most trapping efforts in this HUC have been on the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forest at elevations above 2,300 m (7,700 ft). Additionally, one trapping effort at a lower elevation produced a jumping mouse identified in the field as a Preble's. We have designated two critical habitat units in this subdrainage, Lodgepole Creek and Upper Middle Lodgepole Creek, consistent with two of the three small recovery populations identified for the HUC in our conservation strategy.

In Crow Creek HUC we proposed designation of critical habitat consistent with one of the three small recovery populations called for in our conservation strategy. This area, limited to the F.E. Warren in Cheyenne, has been excluded from the final critical habitat designation under 3(5)(A) and 4(b)(2) of the Act (see Relationship with Department of Defense Lands).

The Lone Tree-Owl HUC supports primary constituent elements for the Preble's both in Wyoming and in Colorado. Based on the recovery criteria of three small or one medium recovery population assigned to this HUC in the Working Draft, we originally proposed two small areas of critical habitat along Lone Tree Creek, one in Wyoming and one in Colorado. However, for reasons discussed previously, we have removed the Lone Tree Creek unit from this designation as the drainage contains no mice verified as Preble's through morphological or genetic means.

We have elected not to designate additional critical habitat on Federal property in the Wyoming portion of the South Platte River drainage aside from the Upper Middle Lodgepole Creek subunit. Within these HUCs, Bureau of Land Management properties are largely upland areas with only small segments of streams. National Forest System lands in the Medicine Bow—Routt National Forest include many suitable-looking streams, but most occur at elevations