

EGGERT'S SUNFLOWER

The Issue

Recovery efforts have turned up several new populations of the species, suggesting that it is more widespread and numerous than biologists believed at the time of listing. As a result, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service delisted Eggert's sunflower in 2005.

Natural History

This sunflower can grow to more than seven feet tall. In August and September the plants produce bright yellow flowers—which are really composite heads composed of myriad small flowers—that can reach about 3.5 inches across. Its rough-surfaced leaves are bluish, and the stem is waxy and smooth. It grows in barrens habitat—grasslands not unlike Midwestern prairies on the interior low plateaus of Alabama, Kentucky and Tennessee. Barrens ecosystems require wildfires to keep them open and suitable for native species.

Fire suppression has reduced the range of this species considerably by allowing shrubs and invasive, nonnative species to overgrow barrens areas. Fragments of open habitat suitable for Eggert's sunflower occur along roadsides and in recently cleared or mown areas.

Threats to the species include land development, fire suppression and continued invasion of habitat by nonnative plants.

Listing

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed Eggert's sunflower as threatened in 1994 and delisted it in 2005.

Management

The species responds well to controlled burning and mowing. Because roadside scraps of surviving habitat are vulnerable to construction activities such as road maintenance and widening, survival for the plant



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depends heavily on protection of large tracts of occupied habitat on public and private land.

When Fish and Wildlife listed the species, biologists had located it at only 34 sites scattered across one county in Alabama, five counties in Kentucky and eight counties in Tennessee. Subsequent surveys by the Service and other agencies located new plant sites, bringing the total known sites to 287 distributed across three counties in Alabama, nine in Kentucky and fifteen in Tennessee.

Because several of these sites lie within protected public lands, Fish and Wildlife Service biologists concluded that the Eggert's sunflower is not likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range and delisted it in 2005.

A key population center is on Arnold Engineering Air Force Base in Tullahoma, Tennessee. The military has been working to avoid damage to plant sites on the base and has been restoring barrens areas that had been converted into pine plantations. Tennessee is protecting four sites on state wildlife management areas, and Nashville is protecting plants on a city park.

Funding

Funding from all government sources for Eggert's sunflower recovery ranked the species at 282 out of 1,311 species, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service fiscal year 2004 report (the most recent available) to Congress, *Federal and State Endangered and Threatened Species Expenditures*.^{*} Total recovery funding for the sunflower from all government sources that year was about \$124,000, with \$42,500 coming from the Service.

Local Contacts

E.G. Courtney, National Wildlife Federation Southeastern Natural Resource Center, Atlanta, Georgia, 404-876-8733; Tennessee Wildlife Federation, 615-353-1133; Fish and Wildlife Region Four Office, Endangered Species Division, 404-679-7100; Tennessee Wildlife Resource Agency, 615-781-6500

Other Threats

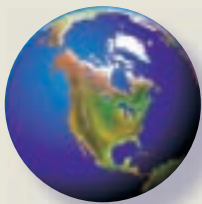
Immediate threats to the plant continue from land development, fire suppression and invasive, nonnative plant species.

^{*} The U.S. Fish and Wildlife *Federal and State Endangered and Threatened Species Expenditures* report incorporates subjective estimates provided by regulated entities without any independent verification and without effort to segregate Endangered Species Act expenditures from other related expenditures. However, for most listed species, no other funding data is available.



U.S. AIR FORCE

THREATS FROM GLOBAL WARMING



The potential for greater rainfall or increased aridity in Eggert's sunflower habitat due to global warming is too speculative for any conclusions about damages from climate change.