

LOWER PLATTE SOUTH
NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT



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January 17, 2008

Public Comments Processing, Attn: RIN 1018-AT79
Division of Policy and Directives Management
U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service
4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 222
Arlington, VA 22203

To Whom It May Concern:

In regards to the publication in the Federal Register Wednesday, December 12, 2007, Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Designation of Critical Habitat for the Salt Creek Tiger Beetle (*Cicindela nevadica lincolniana*), the Lower Platte South Natural Resources District a political subdivision of the State of Nebraska is making the following request and comments:

- Given the local significance and importance of the endangered Salt Creek Tiger Beetle, the District requests a public hearing on the proposed critical habitat designation to give those impacted by the critical habitat designation, an opportunity to comment.
- The District welcomes the proposed critical habitat designation as the District continues efforts in saline wetland conservation, restoration and management.
- The number of acres of critical habitat in the Federal Register (1,795 acres) is not consistent with the news release and Commonly Asked Questions and Answers about proposed critical habitat designation for the Salt Creek Tiger Beetle (1,642 acres). Clarification is important to the amount and distribution of the critical habitat.
- As a local government entity and proposed critical habitat landowner, the District cannot tell where the critical habitat is located by the maps published in the Federal Register. Landowner parcel map data is available and should be used to show the amount of Salt Creek Tiger Beetle habitat for each effected parcel of land.
- The published maps in the Federal Register in critical habitat units #2 and #3 do not show the stream channel of Little Salt Creek as critical habitat even though it states on page 70720, column 1, (3) under Primary Constituent Elements for the Salt Creek Tiger Beetle in the federal register "Non-vegetated stream banks and mid-channel areas, located adjacent to and between saline streams edges and barren salt flats in saline and fresh water wetlands in assemblages that are within 4mi (6 km) of one another; and".
- In critical habitat unit #2, a portion of the habitat where a known existing Salt Creek Tiger Beetle population is located is not included in the proposed critical habitat designation.
- The proposed critical habitat designation should be expanded to include more lands where Salt Creek Tiger Beetles currently exist and include potential reintroduction areas in the Oak Creek watershed where beetle populations were known to exist at one time.

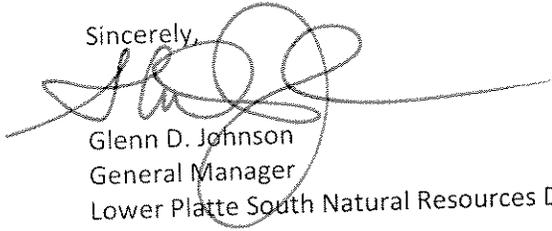
This would also provide for another isolated population in a different watershed as stated for the inclusion of critical habitat unit #4.

- As part of the Saline Wetland Conservation Partnership, the District and the City of Lincoln have acquired, restored and currently manage 1,912 acres of areas containing saline wetlands in Lancaster County. Based on an approximation from the published maps of the critical habitat units the Lower Platte South Natural Resources District and the City of Lincoln currently own or control 221.4 acres of proposed critical habitat. Table 1, page 70721 indicates only state ownership was considered. The Federal Register should recognize and acknowledge the local government's properties.
- Access to U.S. Fish and Wildlife internet information on the Salt Creek Tiger Beetle is not available. For example, the Region VI site does not have access to the draft environmental assessment; on the main U.S. Fish & Wildlife website there is no information through endangered species, Salt Creek Tiger Beetle about critical habitat; the Environmental Conservation On-line System (ECOS) has no information available through endangered species.
- Directions on sending comments is not consistent between the news release (will accept e-mails and faxes) and the federal register (will not accept e-mails and faxes).

Please contact the District and provide the date, time and location for the public hearing. The District has meeting facilities that could be used for the public hearing if it is available.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,



Glenn D. Johnson
General Manager
Lower Platte South Natural Resources District