

Attn: FWS-R6-ES-2008-0111  
Division of Policy and Directives Management  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 222  
Arlington, VA 22203.

December 18, 2008

Dear U.S Fish and Wildlife Representatives:

Please, please, please help put the black-tailed prairie dog under the Endangered Species Act.

I understand that the US Fish and Wildlife is accepting comments to decide whether the black-tailed prairie dog deserves federal protection under the Endangered Species Act. As a concerned citizen, I write to ask you to give the most serious consideration for providing federal protection to the black-tailed prairie dog under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

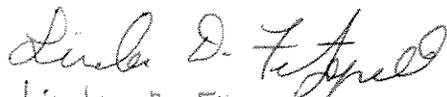
Here in Colorado, the native black-tailed prairie dogs have no protection at all. I have personally seen large numbers of prairie dogs inhumanely poisoned or bulldozed over by developers who feel no obligation or requirement by local government, to relocate or save them from a cruel death. I have watched them disappear in every last parcel of land as you head east out of Denver. And as they disappear, so do the numerous songbirds, hawks, swift foxes, rabbits, coyotes, burrowing owls, black footed ferrets, and many other species that depended on the prairie dogs for food or their burrows for food or shelter. Now I mostly see small fragmented pockets of them pushed to little pieces of land near highways or other undevelopable spaces. Also, I have read of whole colonies being wiped out by hunters for "sport" and poisoned on the eastern plains or in western Colorado by unconcerned farmers and ranchers. I understand that even on government lands (including federal), the black-tailed prairie dog is being indiscriminately killed with horrific poisons, including Rozol, approved for use on prairie dogs in any state around 2004. Given their significant and rapid declines in overall numbers, it is disturbing to think that the federal government supports the widespread extermination of this native keystone species. And now with Sylvatic plague devastating even greater numbers in the last, vast prairie dog habitats like those in S. Dakota, SE Colorado, and elsewhere, any hopes for their survival seem bleak.

Despite the availability of public open spaces and willing private landowners throughout the state, government has put up numerous road blocks to relocation sites, including a Colorado law (SB99-11, passed in 1999) prohibiting the moving the prairie dogs across county lines to private or public lands without the receiving county commissioners' approval. Unfortunately, the prairie dogs, without any government protections, are defenseless at the mercy of private developers, ranchers, and farmers who generally seen these native wildlife inhabitants as a varmint and in conflict with their land uses.

Until there are federal protections, the black-tailed prairie dog will continue to be eradicated on public and private lands until they are all gone except in small fragmented pockets. Adding them to the endangered species act list, becomes the last and final hope to save this important species.

I realize there will be tremendous pressure from livestock and other agricultural organizations to not recognize and support the listing of the black-tailed prairie dog. I hope you will not let the politics of big business prevent you from considering the overwhelming science that reflects the dramatic decline of species numbers. You must base your determination in science as a basis for your final decision. An ESA Listing is the only way to prevent extinction of the Black-tailed Prairie Dog.

Thank you for your consideration.

  
Linda D. Fitzgerald  
2649 S. Dillon St  
Aurora, CO  
80014

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