

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) About the Preble's Meadow Jumping Mouse (Preble's Mouse) and Their Recovery Populations

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Preble's Meadow Jumping Mouse website:

<https://www.fws.gov/species/prebles-meadow-jumping-mouse-zapus-hudsonius-preblei>

General Information

1. **Historically where has Preble's mouse occurred in the United States?** The Preble's meadow jumping mouse (*Zapus hudsonius preblei*; Preble's mouse) is only found in riparian areas below 7600 feet along the Colorado Front Range and below 8000 feet in southeastern Wyoming.
2. **What kind of habitat do Preble's mice use and what is their life history?** Preble's mice are generally found in dense, streamside riparian vegetation consisting of shrubs, grasses, and forbs; they also use the grasslands in adjacent uplands. Preble's mice are true hibernators; they hibernate in underground burrows most of the year, from October to May. The annual survival rate of Preble's is low, and varies seasonally, but the species' is fairly long-lived for a small mammal, with some individuals documented as living at least 3 years.
3. **Where does Preble's mouse occur in the Monument Creek watershed?** The presence of suitable riparian habitat in the Monument Creek watershed, together with capture records of Preble's mice throughout the watershed, indicate that many streamsides are occupied. Preble's mice have been recorded along the main stem of Monument Creek in northern El Paso County, throughout the U.S. Air Force Academy, and along several tributary streams. Trapping records spanning 25+ years have documented that the core of the Monument Creek population occurs within the U.S. Air Force Academy.
4. **Are Preble's mice a good indicator of healthy rivers?** The Preble's mouse is important as an indicator of healthy riparian ecosystems along the Front Range. Dense stands of riparian vegetation also provide important habitat and conditions for many other wildlife species including native fish, songbirds, small mammals, amphibians, and deer. Healthy riparian ecosystems also provide important benefits to people, like clean, fresh water, flood control, and recreational opportunities.

Listing and Recovery

5. **When was the Preble's mouse listed and why?** The Preble's mouse was listed in 1998 as a "Threatened" species under the Endangered Species Act. Loss of much of its original riparian habitat and altered stream flows, primarily resulting from residential and commercial development, along with some agricultural practices, are the primary reasons the Preble's mouse is at-risk and needs protection. Under the Endangered Species Act, plant and animal species may be listed as either endangered or threatened. "Threatened" species are likely to become "Endangered" within the foreseeable future without protective intervention. "Endangered" species are at risk of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of their range.

6. **Where is critical habitat designated and what does it mean for landowners?** When a species is listed under the Endangered Species Act, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) must consider whether there are areas of habitat believed to be essential to the species' conservation. Those areas may be proposed for designation as "critical habitat". In December of 2010, the Service revised the critical habitat designation for the Preble's mouse to include approximately 411 miles of rivers and streams and 34,935 acres of streamside habitat in seven Colorado counties. If activities proposed within designated critical habitat involve a federal permit, federal license, or federal funding, and may disturb the area of critical habitat, then further review of the project is needed. If this is the case, the Service will work with the federal agency and, where appropriate, private, or other landowners to modify their project so that it can proceed without negatively affecting critical habitat. In the Monument Creek watershed, critical habitat was designated along the creek's mainstem upstream of the U.S. Air Force Academy and on several tributary streams. Pursuant to a Section 4(a)(3)(B)(i) Endangered Species Act exemption, critical habitat is not designated within the Air Force Academy due to the implementation of an Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan considered sufficient to promote Preble's conservation.
7. **Why does the Preble's mouse have a recovery plan?** Listing under the Endangered Species Act, such as with the Preble's mouse, is a first step in the recovery process. The next step is to manage the recovery of the species by implementing a comprehensive "recovery plan". Recovery is the process of restoring endangered and threatened species populations to the point where they are no longer at risk of extinction or endangerment and can be removed from the Endangered and Threatened Species List. A Preble's mouse recovery plan was completed in 2018 by an inter-agency group of biologists, ecologists, and Preble's mouse experts. The recovery plan contains criteria specific to the Preble's mouse that are to be used to ensure recovery goals are achieved in each watershed (<https://www.fws.gov/node/68766>).
8. **What are the recovery criteria for the Preble's mouse?** As described in the 2018 Preble's mouse Recovery Plan, and summarized here, the recovery criteria include identification of Recovery Populations throughout the watersheds that represent the species' range. The recovery plan specifies which watersheds will have either small (~3 stream miles), medium (~11 stream miles), or large (~57 stream miles) Recovery Populations. The goal is to have these Recovery Populations provide suitable, connected habitat that is occupied by the Preble's mouse for a reasonable time frame (10 years or more) and that are not expected to be affected by negative management actions for the foreseeable future. The recovery plan further specifies that there will be two large Recovery Populations and six medium Recovery Populations, and that these populations will maintain stability or increase over a 10-year period. Large and medium populations are determined by the number of individual mice present; small populations only need to continue to be occupied over this time period. The Monument Creek watershed (Fountain Creek hydrologic unit code [HUC]) has been identified as a suitable location for a medium Recovery Population (500-2,499 mice) based on the amount of riparian area and population estimates from long-term capture studies. Additional recovery criteria include the development of mechanisms that abate threats to the Preble's

mouse, as well as the preparation of a post-delisting management plan.

9. [How was the public included in the recovery planning process?](#) On April 11, 2016, the Service published a notice in the Federal Register soliciting public comments on the release of a draft revised recovery plan for the Preble's mouse, providing the public with the opportunity to review the revised plan, and solicited any additional information related to Preble's mouse that was not already included in the draft revision. The 60-day public comment period closed on June 10, 2016. A Summary of Public Comments was published in Appendix D of the 2018 final recovery plan.
10. [Will designating a Preble's mouse Recovery Population increase regulatory burdens on private lands?](#) Recovery Population status does mean landowners of those areas will be encouraged to voluntarily conserve or enhance Preble's mouse habitat on their land to further the species' recovery goals, thus contributing to species recovery, with the intent of eventually delisting the species. A Recovery Population's status alone has no further statutory standing than what is already established under the Endangered Species Act.
11. [What is the process for nominating a local Recovery Population?](#) The recovery plan calls for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to convene local Site Conservation Teams (SCTs) throughout the range of the Preble's mouse. The SCTs will carefully evaluate habitat conditions and the potential to support a viable population. The SCTs will then nominate the sections of watersheds that have the best habitat and opportunity to contribute towards species recovery based on the best currently available information and the professional judgement of team members.
12. [What happens if no actions occur to establish a Recovery Population?](#) If no actions occur towards the identification and implementation of a Recovery Population in this watershed and other watersheds within the range of the Preble's mouse, then the recovery goals specified in the recovery plan would not be met, and the delisting of the Preble's mouse would be delayed.
13. [How can the SCT be certain there are Preble's mice currently living along these streams?](#) The Preble's mouse is a small, nocturnal animal that is very difficult to detect except when captured in live-traps or by remote cameras. Such efforts are difficult and expensive, especially in remote areas, so are done infrequently in most areas or are focused on specific, limited study areas. Population sizes can fluctuate widely from year to year, but generally are known to persist in the absence of serious habitat disruptions. Despite habitat damage, loss, and fragmentation throughout the Monument Creek watershed over the past 25 or so years, numerous capture studies have documented the persistence of the Preble's mouse within Monument Creek watershed, and especially on the U.S. Air Force Academy.

Site Conservation Team and Process

14. [Why and where are Site Conservation Teams \(SCTs\) being established?](#) Site Conservation Teams are multidisciplinary teams representing diverse community

stakeholders that work collaboratively to identify a Recovery Population in their given watershed. SCTs are designed to give local communities an active role in the process of recovering the Preble's mouse. The goal of the SCT is to work towards the recovery of the Preble's mouse, and ultimately, the delisting of the species, while also maintaining minimal impact of public and private land uses. In addition to Monument Creek (El Paso County), SCT's have been established in the Poudre River (Larimer County), Plum Creek (Douglas County), and St. Vrain Creek (Boulder County) watersheds.

15. [Who is on the Site Conservation Team?](#) The Monument Creek SCT's current membership includes representatives from the Colorado Springs Stormwater Enterprise, Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments, Colorado Department of Transportation, Colorado Springs Utilities, Colorado State University - Colorado Natural Heritage Program, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Matrix Design Group, Fountain Creek Watershed Flood Control and Greenway District, Town of Monument, Palmer Land Trust, U.S. Air Force Academy, El Paso County, Trails and Open Space Coalition, ERO Resources Corporation, U.S. Forest Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. A list of current stakeholder members can be viewed at ([web link](#)).
16. [How do I contact the Site Conservation Team?](#) You may contact designated Monument Creek SCT stakeholder representatives using the members list at ([web link](#)).
17. [Is it too late for me to get involved in the SCT process?](#) The SCT encourages any person or organization interested in the Preble's mouse recovery issue to participate in regularly scheduled stakeholder meetings. An SCT member is a stakeholder that actively participates in SCT activities.
18. [How and why did the SCT get started?](#) The SCT was initiated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in April 2021 through an open invitation to many likely, local stakeholders. The SCT was established to investigate Preble's mouse habitat and population status in the watershed, recommend where a medium Recovery Population could be designated, and to develop, promote, and monitor future conservation measures.
19. [Will there be a public comment period to express an opinion on the SCT process and conclusions?](#) Anyone is welcome to participate in and communicate with the SCT at any time. Information of particular interest to the SCT at this stage includes: new information relevant to the analysis of the Recovery Population nomination, information on conservation efforts in the watershed that would be needed in the future, and comments that could help improve the accuracy or adequacy of information or methodology used by the team in its analyses and conclusions. All actions and procedures must be consistent with the recovery plan, but local insights and support are also critical to the success of the Recovery Population.

Land Management Practices

20. [What land use activities are compatible with the Preble's meadow jumping mouse?](#)

Land uses and practices that sustain riparian and upland Preble's habitat are generally compatible with the conservation of the Preble's mouse. Development which increases stormwater runoff, however, is a major threat to the Preble's habitat along the drainageways.

21. [What kinds of land management activities would be considered conservation actions within the area of the Recovery Population?](#) As described in the Preble's mouse recovery plan, there are many potential land management recommendations available to landowners and managers to minimize potential impacts and promote habitat enhancements. For example, avoiding development in floodplains would not only protect Preble's mouse populations and habitat, but would also decrease flood risk to people and property. Habitat enhancement options could take the form of noxious weed control, seeding and planting of native species, or by altering the duration, intensity, and/or seasonal use by livestock in Preble's mouse areas. Another example is to keep pet cats indoors, protecting Preble's mice and other small mammals, bats, birds, reptiles, and amphibians.
22. [What is the 4\(d\) rule for the Preble's mouse?](#) The "4(d) rule" under the Endangered Species Act provides the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service flexibility to allow "Take" of a threatened species, under certain circumstances, and is customized for each species. For the Preble's mouse the 4(d) rule provides flexibility to private landowners for ongoing activities that would not hinder the conservation of the species. A general summary of the list of the allowable activities under the 4(d) rule for Preble's mouse is provided below:
 - Limited rodent pest control
 - Ongoing agricultural activities
 - Maintenance and replacement of existing landscaping and related structures and improvements
 - Existing uses of water associated with the exercise of water rights under State law and interstate compacts and decrees
 - Noxious weed control in accordance with State and Federal regulations regarding herbicide use
 - Ongoing (normal and customary) maintenance activities only of man-made ditches.
23. [Will I be required to change how I manage my lands because of the Recovery Population nomination?](#) Designation of a recovery population will not require land management changes. One of the SCT's most important objectives is to secure voluntary partnerships and cooperative management agreements with those who live and work in the Monument Creek watershed.
24. [Will there be a means for compensating landowners when a Recovery Population is designated?](#) There is currently no dedicated compensation available to landowners within the Preble's mouse Recovery Population nominated by the SCT. However, there could be financial opportunities for landowners who choose to apply for habitat conservation assistance through agencies such as Colorado Parks and Wildlife, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the U.S. Department of the Interior.

25. [How can public land managers and private landowners help recover the Preble's mouse, including improving or maintaining riparian areas in the Monument Creek watershed?](#) The SCT needs public land managers and private landowners willing to provide access for field biologists to identify new Preble's habitats and populations, and to monitor known populations throughout the Monument Creek watershed. Information collected on private lands will not be shared unless the landowner gives the SCT and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service written permission. Secondly, public land managers and private landowners can participate in various cost-share or grant programs that would fund the protection or restoration of Preble's mouse habitat within the designated Recovery Population. All of these activities could be administered through a conservation easement, Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on public lands, Habitat Conservation Plan's on private lands, or other negotiated instruments.