

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

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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 along riparian areas below 7600 feet on 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 look very similar to the more common western meadow jumping mice, and experts often use DNA tests to be sure that they have a genuine Preble's mouse. Preble's mice can hop in 3-foot jumps and can swim, which is impressive for a small mouse. Preble's mice are true hibernators; they hibernate in underground burrows most of the year, from October to May.
3. **Where does Preble's mouse occur in the North Fork of the Cache la Poudre River watershed?** The presence of suitable, well-connected riparian habitat in the North Fork of the Cache la Poudre River watershed, together with capture records of Preble's mice throughout the watershed, indicate that the area's streamsides are likely to be well occupied. Preble's mice have been recorded along the main stem of the North Fork of the Cache la Poudre River at least seven times between 1998 and 2018. There are another six records from between 1997 and 2002 along Stonewall, North Fork Rabbit, Middle Fork Rabbit, and Lone Pine Creeks. In addition, there are at least ten other records from the larger watershed above Halligan Dam.
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 trout, songbirds, and deer. Riparian ecosystems also provide important benefits to people, like clean, fresh water and recreational opportunities.

Listing and Recovery Plan (<https://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/es/species/mammals/preble/RECOVERY%20PLAN/Sept2018FinalRecoveryPlan.pdf>)

5. **When was the Preble's mouse listed and why?** The Preble's mouse was first 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 construction and associated development, along with some livestock and agricultural practices, are the primary reasons the Preble's mouse is at risk and needs protection under the law. Under the Endangered Species Act, plant and animal species may be listed as either endangered or threatened. Listed as "Threatened"

means a species is likely to become “Endangered” within the foreseeable future without protective intervention. “Endangered” means a species is at risk of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

6. **Where is critical habitat designated and what does it mean for landowners?** When a species is proposed for listing 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 that 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 impacting critical habitat. In the North Fork of the Cache la Poudre River watershed, critical habitat was designated along the river's mainstem between Halligan and Seaman Reservoirs, Stonewall and Tenmile Creeks below an elevation of about 6,400 feet, and Lone Pine Creek and the three forks of Rabbit Creek below about 7,600 feet.
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, and the tool used for recovery is called a recovery plan. Recovery is the process of restoring endangered and threatened species to the point where they are no longer at risk of extinction or endangerment and can be removed from the list of threatened and endangered species. A recovery plan was completed in 2018 by an inter-agency group of Preble's mouse experts. The recovery plan contains recovery criteria specific to the Preble's mouse that are to be used to ensure recovery goals are achieved in each watershed.
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 impacted 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 North Fork of the Cache la Poudre River watershed has been identified as a suitable location for a large Recovery Population (at least 2,500 mice) based on the large amount of well-maintained riparian vegetation and the results of 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 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 opportunity to contribute towards species recovery based on the best currently available information and the professional judgement of team members regarding the habitat.
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 could 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 of habitat. Population sizes can fluctuate widely from year to year, but generally are known to persist in the absence of serious habitat disruptions. The long-term presence of suitable habitat without any large-scale environmental disruptions or habitat discontinuities, and along with an observation record going back 25 years which includes Preble's mouse observations as recently as 2018, strongly suggests Preble's mice still occupy the area of the North Fork of the Cache la Poudre River watershed.

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. The Poudre River SCT was the first Preble's mouse SCT to be established. Several other Preble's mouse SCTs have recently been formed, and the establishment of other Preble's mouse SCTs are in the planning stages.

15. **Who is on the Site Conservation Team?** The Poudre River SCT's current team membership includes representatives from the East Rabbit Creek Ranch, Landowners Association for Phantom Canyon Ranches, Coalition for the Poudre River, Colorado Open Lands, The Nature Conservancy, City of Ft Collins Utilities and Department of Natural Resources, Colorado Water Conservation Board, Colorado State University - Colorado Natural Heritage Program and the Center for Collaborative Conservation, Larimer County Natural Resources and Open Space offices, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Colorado State Land Board, Natural Resource Conservation Service, U.S. Forest Service, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. A list of current members can be found at: <https://collaborativeconservation.org/media/sites/142/2021/07/Poudre-HUC-SCT-roster-07162021-website.pdf>
16. **How do I contact the Site Conservation Team?** You may contact designated representatives of the Poudre River SCT. A list of all the members of the Poudre River SCT is available at: https://collaborativeconservation.org/2021/06/03/prebles_sct/
17. **Is it too late for me to get involved in the SCT process?** The SCT encourages anyone who is interested in the Preble's mouse recovery issue in the North Fork of the Cache la Poudre River watershed to participate as a stakeholder, or join the SCT as an individual member or representative of an organization. A stakeholder is someone with an interest or concern with the North Fork of the Cache la Poudre River watershed and / or the Preble's mouse. 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 Service in June of 2019 under an open invitation to many local stakeholders with the request that the invitation be further circulated. Informing the public about what the SCT is doing has been one of the team's primary functions, which is currently ongoing. The SCT was established to investigate Preble's mouse habitat in the watershed, recommend where a large Recovery Population could be designated, and develop, promote, and monitor 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 will need to continue to be based on the approved recovery plan, but there are still various ways to comment on opportunities for stream and riparian habitat restoration and other topics that will help ensure successful recovery for Preble's mice.

Land Management Practices

20. What land use activities are compatible with the Preble's meadow jumping mouse?

Most current land use practices in the North Fork of the Cache la Poudre River watershed are generally compatible with conservation objectives for the Preble's mouse. There are several Best Management Practices and Conservation Measures that under development from the Service to help landowners and managers explore options to maintain and enhance healthy riparian habitat that supports the Preble's mouse and other wildlife species.

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 Conservation Measures, 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 efforts, active seeding and planting of native species, or by altering the duration, intensity, and/or seasonal use by livestock in Preble's mouse areas, all of which support habitat for a wide variety of species, including the Preble's mouse. 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 allows the Service flexibility for special provisions 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 (with certain limitations) under the 4(d) rule for Preble's mouse is provided below, while greater details on the Preble's mouse 4(d) rule can be found in 50 C.F.R. § 17.40(l) at:

<https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CFR-2002-title50-vol1/CFR-2002-title50-vol1-sec17-40>

- Limited rodent pest control
- Ongoing agricultural activities (except for new agricultural practices that affect Preble's mouse habitat)
- Maintenance and replacement of existing landscaping and related structures and improvements
- Existing uses of water associated with the exercise of perfected water rights under state law and interstate compacts and decrees
- Noxious weed control activities according to existing State laws and Federal regulations regarding herbicide labeling
- Ongoing (normal and customary) maintenance activities only to 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 partnerships and cooperative management agreements with those who live and work in the North Fork of the Cache la Poudre River watershed. All associated partnerships and agreements to promote Preble's mouse populations and habitat would be voluntary.
24. **Will there be a means for compensating landowners when a Recovery Population is designated?** Currently, no dedicated compensation is available or expected specific to the designation of Preble's mouse Recovery Populations. However, there could be financial opportunities for landowners who choose to apply for habitat conservation assistance. Potential sources of grant funding include various programs under Colorado Parks and Wildlife, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Department of the Interior, and other sources.
25. **How can public land managers and private landowners help with this effort to recover the Preble's mouse and for the improvement or maintenance of stream and riparian health in the North Fork of the Cache la Poudre River watershed?** The SCT needs the participation of public land managers and private landowners in the North Fork of the Cache la Poudre River drainage. Participation involves two things: First, allowing a small team of science technicians to periodically visit properties to briefly monitor the Preble's mouse populations in the riparian vegetation. Landowners are encouraged to participate in the site visits. Private landowner information collected during site visits will not be shared outside of this project. Secondly, public land managers and private landowners can participate in a program to provide protection and / or restoration of Preble's mouse habitat within the area of the Recovery Population. Several options for participation are available, including: 1) existing Livermore Area Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP); 2) conservation easements; 3) Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) on public lands; 4) Wildlife Extension Agreements with the Service; and 5) individual HCPs with the Service. Details on these options are available through the SCT.
26. **What is the Livermore Area Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), and how would that benefit me?** The Livermore Area Habitat Conservation Plan was written by local community members and is approved by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Landowners can choose to voluntarily sign up through the plan without further US Fish and Wildlife Service consultation and participate in restoration and conservation activities that benefit the Preble's mouse.