



File Code: 1950-1

Date: July 6, 2004

Dear Interested Party:

The Uinta National Forest is conducting an environmental analysis of a proposal to plant seedlings and seeds of clay phacelia on up to thirteen sites within unoccupied suitable habitat on the Forest. The general project area is on the Spanish Fork Ranger District, located about 23 miles southeast of Spanish Fork, near Highway 6 between the Mill Fork and Skyview areas in Utah County (see attached map).

BACKGROUND

Clay phacelia (*Phacelia argillacea*) is a very rare herbaceous wildflower that is currently known to occur on only two sites on steep, barren Green River shale hillslopes, on privately-owned lands. The two sites are about 6 miles apart near Highway 6 in Utah County. Apparently similar habitat occurs on hundreds of acres of private and National Forest System lands around the known sites. The species was also found in locations in Wasatch County in 1883 and 1894, about seven miles from the nearest current site. Botanical surveys since the 1980s have not found the species at the historic sites or any other locations in either county. Surveys of the known sites have rarely found more than a total of 200 plants in a year. Often populations have numbered only 10 to 15 plants per year. However, in 2004 over 100 individuals were observed at one of the sites. Observations since the 1970s have documented loss of plants from construction activities, trampling by sheep and being eaten by squirrels.

The species was listed as "Endangered" under the terms of the Endangered Species Act, in 1978. A recovery plan for clay phacelia was signed in 1982. It calls for establishment of one or more additional populations in protected habitat, and increasing yearly plant numbers to at least 2,000 individuals. No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Under the Endangered Species Act, private landowners are not required to protect listed plants.

PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of the proposal is to establish permanent self-sustaining populations of clay phacelia at several sites in order to assist in moving the species towards recovery and delisting. The need is based on the contraction of the species' historic range into the current two sites, and the availability of relatively protected suitable habitat on the Uinta National Forest.



DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

The Uinta National Forest, in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is proposing to plant seedlings and seeds of clay phacelia on up to 13 sites. As described previously, these sites are located near Highway 6 on National Forest System lands in Utah County on the Spanish Fork Ranger District. All the sites occur on steep barren slopes and rock outcrops derived from Green River shale. Each of the sites encompasses about one acre of land, but the actual planting at any site would cover only a fraction of that area.

Fifty or more greenhouse-grown seedlings, and 100 to 200 seeds of clay phacelia would be planted on each selected site. The planting would be done by hand. Plants would be young, in the rosette stage, and planted in the fall to avoid drying out. Plants would be watered on the day of planting using water carried to the site. Seeds would be covered with native soil. Seeds would be either collected from the wild by landowner permission and with USFWS permits, or one subsequent generation produced from wild-collected seed.

The sites are located within a portion of the Diamond Fork cattle grazing allotment that is no longer grazed to any extent. The sites are all several hundred feet away from roads, trails, utility corridors, and property boundaries. There are no conflicting water or mineral developments in, proposed for, or likely to occur on the proposed sites. Given that there are few other uses made of these steep slopes, no protection other than possible caging to prevent rodent and other wildlife grazing is being considered for the plants.

HOW CAN YOU BE INVOLVED?

The public is invited to provide scoping input for, and/or provide comment on the proposed action. The Forest Service uses public input that is specific to the proposal to help in project design and decision-making. We are interested in what you think about this proposal and whether there are issues or alternatives that should be considered. Only those who submit timely and substantive comments will be accepted as appellants. Substantive comments are those within the scope of, are specific to, and have a direct relationship to the proposed action, and include reasons the Responsible Officials should consider in reaching a decision. Each individual, or, for an organization, an authorized representative, submitting substantive comments must either sign the comments or otherwise verify their identity to attain appeal eligibility. Comments should include the information required pursuant to 36 CFR 215.6(a)(3), as published in the Federal Register on June 4, 2003. Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record for the project.

Please send substantive comments to the Responsible Official, Peter W. Karp - Forest Supervisor, P. O. Box 1428, Provo, Utah, 84603; phone (801) 342-5100; FAX (801) 342-5144, or hand-deliver your comments to the Uinta National Forest Supervisor's Office located at 88 West 100 North, Provo, Utah, from 8:00 a.m. through 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday excluding federal holidays. We would appreciate comments back by August 1, 2004.

Comments may also be submitted by e-mail. E-mail comments may be sent to comments-intermtn-uinta@fs.fed.us . The opportunity to comment ends 30 days following the date of publication of the legal notice in the *Daily Herald*.

Thank you for your interest in management of the Uinta National Forest. If you have questions about this proposal, please contact ecologist Denise Van Keuren at the address or phone number above, or at dvankeuren@fs.fed.us.

Sincerely,

/s/ Wm. Reese Pope (for)
PETER W KARP
Forest Supervisor