

NEWS RELEASE

**U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Mountain-Prairie Region
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For Immediate Release

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Reintroduces Black Footed Ferrets in Logan County, Kansas

After reviewing public comments on a Draft Environmental Assessment and Application for an Enhancement of Survival Permit, the Service has determined the reintroduction of black-footed ferrets on private lands in Logan County, Kansas, will not have a significant impact on the human environment and will not require an Environmental Impact Statement.

This week the Service released 24 captive-reared ferrets on private lands in Logan County, Kansas.

The proposed reintroduction experiment would continue for 5 years, after which, it may be terminated or continued indefinitely depending upon success and cooperating landowner desires.

Copies of the Application for an Enhancement of Survival Permit, Finding of No Significant Impact, and Black-Footed Ferret Reintroduction Plan for Logan County are available by visiting <http://mountain-prairie.fws.gov/species/mammals/blackfootedferret/>, or by calling the Service's Mountain-Prairie Regional Office at 303-236-4256.

Black-footed ferrets, one of the rarest mammals in North America, were once found throughout the Great Plains, from northern Mexico to southern Saskatchewan, Canada. Their range extended from the Rocky Mountains east through the Dakotas and south through Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. The national goal to improve the status of the species from endangered to threatened is to establish 10 free-ranging populations of ferrets, spread over the widest possible area within their former range. To meet this down-listing goal, it is hoped that 1,500 breeding adult ferrets will be established in the wild by the year 2010.

Black-footed ferrets are found almost exclusively in prairie dog colonies. Prairie dogs are their principal prey, and ferrets live and rear their young in prairie dog burrows. Black-footed ferrets have one litter each year, with an average of about three kits per litter. In the

wild, kits do not come above ground until they are two-three months old. Mothers and young remain together until early fall. By October, the kits are able to take care of themselves.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 97-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 548 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

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