

ELKO DAILY FREE

Elko, Nevada

JANUARY 11, 2008

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Save the Bunnies

Pygmy rabbit species may qualify for federal protection

SPOKANE, Wash. (AP) — The federal government this week announced it will consider endangered species protection for the pygmy rabbit, which is struggling to survive in eight Western states.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced it will conduct a scientific review to decide if the tiny rabbit — the smallest in North America — deserves protection as a threatened or endangered species.

"The finding does not mean that the service has decided it is appropriate to list the pygmy rabbit," said Bob Williams, supervisor of the agency in Reno. But it does trigger a thorough review of biological information.

The Service agreed to complete the 90-day finding as a result of a lawsuit filed by Western Watersheds Project, Biodiversity Conservation Alliance, Center for



Associated Press/File
Bucky Elias, from Washington State University, holds a pygmy rabbit released in March near Ephrata, Wash.

Native Ecosystems, and Oregon Natural Desert Association and Sagebrush Sea Campaign.

In 2003, the federal government listed pygmy rabbits in Eastern



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

The approximate range of the pygmy rabbit includes most of northern Nevada.

Rabbit hunting

Hunting of pygmy rabbits is regulated in Nevada. Hunters may shoot up to 10 per day, with a maximum of 20 in possession. The season ends Feb. 28.

Washington as endangered, and efforts to reintroduce the rabbits have struggled as the animals have been devoured by predators.

Because the rabbits are already listed in Washington, the new study covers the states of California, Oregon, Nevada, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming and Utah.

See RABBITS, A3