

## **Endangered Species Act**

U. S. Department of the Interior

Fish and Wildlife Service

Ecological Services Office in Carlsbad requested that you be notified of the following:

The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed the California gnatcatcher as threatened on March 25, 1993. Upon listing, the California gnatcatcher receives protection under section 9 of the Endangered Species Act. The California gnatcatcher occurs almost exclusively in the coastal sage scrub plant community. Coastal sage scrub vegetation is composed of relatively low-growing, dry season deciduous and succulent plants. Characteristic plants of this community include coastal sagebrush, various species of sage, California buckwheat, lemonade berry, California encelia and prickly pear and cholla cactus. The gnatcatcher is generally found at sites dominated by coastal sagebrush.

It is the Service's opinion that areas that have been recently cleared of vegetation (1991 or more recently) or areas that have been consistently, annually or biannually, cleared of vegetation would not be expected to contain California gnatcatcher habitat. These areas could continue to be cleared as a firebreak or for weed abatement without any expected conflict with the Endangered Species Act.

Areas that have not been cleared of vegetation annually or biannually since 1991, and have coastal sage scrub, the landowner should contact the Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure that any clearing activities are in compliance with the Endangered Species Act. A permit to allow a "take" of the gnatcatcher if needed, may be applied for from the Fish and Wildlife Service. Questions should be directed to the Carlsbad Field Office at (760) 431-9440.