



# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

## news release

**Fish and Wildlife Service**

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Patricia Fisher 202-208-5634

### THREE AUSTRALIAN KANGAROO SPECIES PROPOSED FOR REMOVAL FROM ENDANGERED SPECIES LIST

The Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has proposed removing three kangaroo species from the list of endangered and threatened species.

The proposal is based on improved management plans by the Commonwealth of Australia and its various state governments, which should guarantee the continued well-being of the animals throughout their present range. The current population of the red, western gray, and eastern grey kangaroos totals at least 18 million in the Australian States of Western Australia, South Australia, New South Wales, and Queensland.

"We are always pleased when a species' status improves enough to warrant removal from the endangered species list," said Service Director John Turner. "Australia has developed excellent plans to address kangaroo management and provide for the long term survival of healthy populations."

The red kangaroo, the western gray kangaroo, and the eastern gray kangaroo in mainland Australia were listed by the Service as threatened in 1974. At that time, the Service stated that population monitoring actions and management plans were inadequate

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and there was no national coordination of kangaroo management activities. Also, both law enforcement measures and the amount of land set aside for native wildlife were considered unsatisfactory. An accompanying special rule banned the importation of kangaroos and their products to the U.S. until effective management plans were developed.

In 1981, citing the implementation of effective management plans, the Service lifted the importation ban. However, kangaroos still retained their threatened status under the Endangered Species Act.

The Service proposed delisting the species in 1983, but the possible impacts of a severe drought led to withdrawal of the proposal. The agency said delisting could be reconsidered after more information was gathered on how the species recover from droughts.

In response to a 1989 petition to reinstate the importation ban, the Service issued a report based upon an extensive fact-finding trip to the four states to determine the adequacy of Australian management plans. The report entitled, "Review of Kangaroo Management in Australia, March 1990," generally documented excellent management plans and legislation, healthy populations, and adequate law enforcement. It also cited the extensive system of protected National Parks and Reserves containing important kangaroo habitat.

In November 1990, the Service received a petition seeking the removal of the three species from the endangered species list. The findings of Service's 1990 report were cited as the basis for the request.

Today, the purpose of kangaroo conservation in Australia is to maintain viable populations throughout the species' range while minimizing adverse impacts high concentrations of the animals could have on land used for farming or grazing.

The three kangaroo species are commercially harvested under a sustained yield management system including harvest quotas. The quotas are based on population information, habitat conditions, and the estimated amount of damage control necessary to protect agricultural and pastoral interests. The numbers harvested must not adversely impact the continued welfare of the species.

Every three years the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service provides population index figures for each state with harvest quotas. The most recent 1990 index records 8.6 million kangaroos in New South Wales, 4.1 million in Queensland, 2.1

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million in South Australia, and 3.2 million in Western Australia. During the recent drought, kangaroo populations have declined in New South Wales but are expected to recover, as they have in the past. The species are protected in National Parks and Reserves which include about 5 percent of the country's total land area. The kangaroo population now may well exceed that of the population present before Australia was settled by Europeans.

The proposed rule was published in the January 21, 1993, Federal Register. Comments on the proposed rule must be submitted by (60 days from publication). Requests for public hearings must be received by (45 days from publication).

The petition, finding, supporting data, and comments will be available for public inspection, by appointment, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday, at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 4401 North Fairfax Drive, Room 725, Arlington, Virginia 22203. Comments and questions should be addressed to Dr. Charles W. Dane, Chief, Office of Scientific Authority at the above address, by telephone (703-358-1708), or by fax (703-358-2276).