



United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

New England Field Office
70 Commercial Street, Suite 300
Concord, NH 03301-5087
<http://www.fws.gov/newengland>

REF: Bicknell's thrush 12-month finding

February 24, 2016

Dear Interested Party:

I am contacting you because you have either previously expressed an interest in the conservation of the Bicknell's thrush (*Catharus bicknelli*), or may have information on the species, its habitats, its distribution, or its threats. On August 26, 2010, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) received a petition from the Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) requesting that the Bicknell's thrush be listed as threatened or endangered and that critical habitat be designated under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA). In response to the petition, the Service published a 90-day finding on August 15, 2012, indicating that the petition presented substantial scientific or commercial information that listing this species may be warranted.¹

The 90-day finding opened an initial 30-day information solicitation period and began a status review for the Bicknell's thrush. While our 90-day finding was based solely on the information provided in the petition and in our files at the time the petition was received, the status review and 12-month finding will be based on the best available scientific and commercial information. To date, we have been delayed in completing the Bicknell's thrush status review and 12-month finding because of higher priority ESA listing evaluations. However, we are still accepting information and intend to complete the status review and 12-month petition finding no later than September 30, 2017 to comply with a court-approved settlement agreement with CBD.

We are assessing the species' status throughout its wintering, migration, and summer range. This range includes: Canada, the Bahamas, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica, and the United States (CT, DE, FL, GA, MA, MD, ME, NC, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, SC, VA, VT, and Puerto Rico). Because we intend that the 12-month finding will be based on the best available scientific and commercial information, we are seeking updated information about the Bicknell's thrush biology, range, population trends, stressors and threats, and conservation actions taken on the species' behalf. In addition, the following Bicknell's thrush specific information will be particularly helpful:

- Potential impacts to the species resulting from climate change, such as data, analyses, and predictions, including those related to:

¹ The 90-day petition finding for the Bicknell's thrush can be found at <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2012-08-15/pdf/2012-19970.pdf>, accessed December 10, 2015.

- the loss or degradation of spruce-fir forested habitat where the species breeds, including the projected impacts to the Canadian portion of the species' breeding range;
 - impacts to forest habitats in the Caribbean that provide wintering habitat for the species; and
 - alterations to the cycling and productivity in balsam fir cone production that may alter population dynamics in red squirrels, a major predator of nestling Bicknell's thrush.
- Ongoing and projected effects of ground level ozone emissions on spruce and fir in the northeastern United States and maritime provinces of Canada.
 - Behavioral, survival, and reproductive consequences of various mercury accumulation levels in the species.
 - Effects to the species resulting from the construction of commercial wind turbines and transmission lines in breeding habitat, including habitat loss, mortality, productivity, and avoidance of turbines as a result of blade movements or noise.
 - Regulatory mechanisms that may be protective of the Bicknell's thrush and its habitat, particularly on its wintering grounds in the Greater Antilles.

If, after the status review, we determine that listing the Bicknell's thrush is warranted, we will propose to designate critical habitat if it is prudent and determinable to do so. Therefore, we also request data and information on:

- (1) what may constitute "physical or biological features essential to the conservation of the species," within the geographical range currently occupied by the species;
- (2) geographic areas where these features are currently found;
- (3) whether any of these features may require special management considerations or protections;
- (4) specific areas outside the geographical area currently occupied by the species that are "essential for the conservation of the species"; and
- (5) what, if any, critical habitat you think we should propose for designation if the species is proposed for listing, and why such habitat meets the requirements of section 4 of the ESA.

Please include sufficient information with your submission (such as scientific journal articles or other publications) to allow us to verify any scientific or commercial information you include.

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If you have information on these or other relevant Bicknell's thrush topics, we would appreciate hearing from you by May 1, 2016. Written comments may be submitted by U.S. mail or hand-delivery to: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, New England Field Office, Attn: Bicknell's Thrush, 70 Commercial Street, Suite 300, Concord, New Hampshire 03301.

Thank you for your interest in the Bicknell's thrush. If you have any questions, please contact Anthony Tur of our office at anthony_tur@fws.gov or 603-223-2541.

Sincerely yours,



Acting for

Thomas R. Chapman
Supervisor
New England Field Office