

Jaguar Habitat to Be Protected

U.S. announces plans to review critical land that the endangered jaguar needs to survive.

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The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced that it plans to set aside critical land to help the survival of the endangered jaguar.

The agency said this week that it will review which lands the big cat needs to survive, according to an item published in the Federal Register on Jan. 13. In the document, the agency says it anticipates publishing a proposed habitat designation in January 2011.

Jaguars are the largest and most powerful felines in the Western Hemisphere, and their habitat includes Mexico, Central America, parts of South America, and parts of the Southwest United States. They prefer to live in jungles and are excellent swimmers.

Their habitat once ranged from California to Louisiana; they were thought to have been extirpated from the United States, but several of the big cats have been seen in Arizona and New Mexico in recent years.

Wildlife experts say that protection of wildlife corridors between Mexico and the United States is critical to the jaguar's survival and recovery because there is a population of the big cats in northern Sonora state.