

Gunnison prairie dog doesn't make endangered list

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FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. (AP) — The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has decided against listing a prairie dog found in four Southwestern states as endangered or threatened.

The agency said Thursday that threats to the Gunnison prairie dog won't cause the animal to become extinct soon or in foreseeable future.

The prairie dogs live in grasslands and intermountain valleys of northern Arizona, southwestern and south-central Colorado, northwestern New Mexico, and southeastern Utah.

Federal officials say while outbreaks of plague have decimated some colonies, the populations have rebounded and are stable.

Recreational shooting also reduces populations, but officials say those impacts aren't spread across the prairie dogs' entire range.

The environmental group, WildEarth Guardians, says the federal government has dodged its responsibility to protect a species that exists in five percent of its historic range.

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