491, Boquerón, Puerto Rico 00622; and at the Service's Southeast Regional Office, 1875 Century Boulevard, Atlanta, Georgia 30345.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ms. Susan Silander at the Caribbean Field Office address (809/851–7297). SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Gesneria pauciflora is a small shrub currently known from only three populations in the western mountains of Puerto Rico. It was discovered by the German botanical collector Paul Sintenis on December 3, 1884, at "Indiera Fria" in Maricao, Puerto Rico. Numerous other botanists collected the plant from this same location throughout the years. A second population was discovered recently in the municipality of Sabana Grande, near the headwaters of the Seco River and a third from a small tributary of the Lajas River. Herbarium specimens indicate that the species has also been collected in the past from the Yaguez River and from Cerro Las Mesas (D. Kolterman and G. Breckon, pers. comm.). Population estimates are difficult due to the plant's habit of growing in dense mats; however, the largest population (Maricao River) has been estimated at approximately 1,000 individuals and the second (Seco River) at 50 (Proctor 1991: CPC 1992). Plants are known to occur in clusters of few to numerous individuals. Each population consists of clusters or colonies of individuals. D. Kolterman and G. Breckon (pers. comm.) have indicated that the population of the Maricao River consists of 12 colonies; the Seco River of 3; and the Lajas River of 2.

Gesneria pauciflora is a small gregarious shrub which may reach 30 centimeters in height and 8 millimeters in diameter. Stems may be erect or decumbent and the bark is smooth, graybrown, and glabrous. The leaves are alternate and the terete or flattened petioles are from 2 to 7 millimeters long. Leaf blades are shaped like a narrow trowel, 2.8 to 9.2 centimeters long and .9 to 2.3 centimeters wide, membranous, dark green and glossy above, and pilose along the prominent veins. The margin is subentire toward the cuneate base and serrate to sublobate above. The inflorescences are one to few-flowered and the peduncles from 6.1 to 15.3 centimeters long and slightly curved. The pedicels are 1 to 2 centimeters long, reddish-brown, and pilose to glabrescent. The corolla is tubular, curved, 2 to 2.3 centimeters long, 4 millimeters wide at the base, narrowing to 3 millimeters but widening to 5 millimeters at the middle and again

narrowing to 4 millimeters at the mouth. The 5-lobed corolla is yellow to yellow-orange and densely pilose outside but glabrous inside. The fruit is a capsule, approximately 4 millimeters long and wide, gray-brown, glabrescent, with 5 to 10 not prominent ridges (Proctor 1991).

At all known localities the species is found growing in rocky stream beds on wet serpentine rock, where water is constantly seeping. The plants may be submerged for a short time during periods of high water (D. Kolterman and G. Breckon, pers. comm.). The Maricao and Seco River localities are found within the Maricao Commonwealth Forest, managed by the Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources. However, the Lajas River population lies at the edge of the forested area and it is not certain whether the site falls within Commonwealth Forest property (D. Kolterman and G. Breckon, pers. comm.). The largest population is located in an area of steep unstable slopes and may be threatened by landslides and flood damage. Forest management practices such as trail construction may adversely affect the species. The Center for Plant Conservation (1992) assigned Gesneria pauciflora a priority 1 ranking, indicating that the plant could possibly go extinct in the wild within the next 5 years.

Previous Federal Action

Gesneria pauciflora was recommended for Federal listing by the Smithsonian Institution (Ayensu and DeFilipps 1978). The species was included among the plants being considered as endangered or threatened by the Service as published in the Federal Register notice of review dated December 15, 1980 (45 FR 82480); the November 28, 1983 update (48 FR 53680), the revised notice of September 27, 1985 (50 FR 39526), and the February 21, 1990 (55 FR 6184) and September 30, 1993 (58 FR 51144) notices of review. The species was designated as a category 1 species (species for which the Service has substantial information supporting the appropriateness of proposing to list them as endangered or threatened) in the notices of review published on February 21, 1990, and September 30, 1993.

In a notice published in the Federal Register on February 15, 1983 (48 FR 6752), the Service reported the earlier acceptance of the new taxa in the Smithsonian's 1978 book as under petition within the context of Section 4(b)(3)(A) of the Act, as amended in 1982. Beginning in October 1983, and in

each October thereafter, the Service found that listing *Gesneria pauciflora* was warranted but precluded by other pending listing actions of a higher priority, and that additional data on vulnerability and threats were still being gathered. A proposed rule to list *Gesneria pauciflora*, published on February 18, 1994 (59 FR 8165), constituted the final 1-year finding for the species in accordance with Section 4(b)(3)(B)(ii) of the Act.

Summary of Comments and Recommendations

In the February 18, 1994, proposed rule and associated notifications, all interested parties were requested to submit factual reports of information that might contribute to the development of a final rule. Appropriate agencies of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Federal agencies, scientific organizations, and other interested parties were contacted and requested to comment. A newspaper notice inviting general comment was published in the 'El Dia' on March 18, 1994. Four letters of comment were received and discussed below. A public hearing was neither requested nor held.

The Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources, both the Terrestrial Ecology Section and the Natural Heritage Program, supported the listing of the species as threatened.

The Puerto Rico Planning Board stated that although they did not have any proposed projects before them at this time that might affect the species, they would circulate the information within the agency in order that it could be considered upon receipt of projects.

Dr. Duane Kolterman and Dr. Gary Breckon provided additional information on a recently discovered population along a tributary of the Lajas River in or near the Maricao Commonwealth Forest as well as on historical records, biological information and threats. They state that survival of the colonies is dependent on water flow, water level, siltation and land slippage and that any major clearing or water removal upstream or water impoundment downstream may potentially harm the species. They stated that because of the absence of a management program in the Commonwealth Forest and the apparent loss of the species at two historical collection sites, the species should be designated as endangered rather than threatened. The Service, however, believes that current threats to the species are not imminent and that a classification of threatened is more appropriate.