

# Preble's mouse may be worthy of protection

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U.S. scientists say the little-known, but controversial, Preble's meadow jumping mouse should continue to receive federal threatened species protection.

At issue are federal programs that protect streamside habitats at a cost of as much as \$150 million to developers and ranchers, The Denver Post reported.

Although most people agree the animal's habitat, and therefore the mouse, are at risk, there is much debate concerning whether the mouse differs from other meadow mice that can leap a foot in the air.

The federal Endangered Species Act protects species and subspecies of animals threatened with extinction.

University of California-Davis biologist Douglas Kelt and Wayne Spencer, a biologist at the Conservation Biology Institute in San Diego, last year proposed ending federal protection for the Preble's mouse, the Post said. But both men have changed their mind.

Citing new research, they say the Preble's mouse is a distinct species worthy of protection. They said they changed their minds after discovering studies used by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service were flawed.

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