

Federal wildlife officials say preserving habitat areas for Yadon's piperia, an endangered perennial orchid that primarily grows in Monterey pine forests, could cost up to \$13 million during the next 20 years.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on Tuesday released a draft economic analysis that estimates the costs associated with conserving more than 2,000 acres of critical habitat for the endangered plant.

The study says it would cost \$9.6 million to \$12.9 million over the next two decades to protect habitat areas for Yadon's piperia. In October, the federal agency proposed designating 2,306 acres as critical habitat for the embattled orchid.

About 84 percent of the proposed habitat area consists of private lands on the Peninsula and other parts of the county. State land comprises 9 percent of proposed habitat area, while 7 percent belongs to local government agencies.

Of the private lands, about 25 percent is owned or managed by the Elkhorn Slough Foundation and the Del Monte Forest Foundation, agency officials said.

Yadon's piperia, which grows small white flowers on a slender stalk, was listed as endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act in 1998.

The proposed critical habitat area was designated in response to a lawsuit filed by the Center for Biological Diversity against the federal wildlife agency.

Federal law requires that wildlife officials consider economic and other impacts of proposed critical habitat decisions. If the benefits of excluding an area from critical habitat outweigh the benefits of including it, the wildlife agency may exclude it.

The draft economic analysis is available on the agency's Ventura Web site, [ventura.fws.gov](http://ventura.fws.gov).

Comments on the draft economic analysis and proposed critical habitat areas can be submitted in writing to: Field Supervisor, Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office, 2493 Portola Road, Suite B, Ventura 93003.

They can be faxed to 805-644-3958, or submitted by e-mail to [fw8piya@fws.gov](mailto:fw8piya@fws.gov).