

**Recommendation for the Designation of  
Peters Mountain Mallow**  
*Iliamna corei* Sherff  
**as a Virginia Species of Greatest Conservation Need**

Contacts

Becky Gwynn, Deputy Director  
Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources  
[becky.gwynn@dwr.virginia.gov](mailto:becky.gwynn@dwr.virginia.gov)  
A 7870 Villa Park Drive, P.O. Box 90778, Henrico, VA 23228-0778  
(804) 593-2043

Jason Bulluck, Director  
Virginia Natural Heritage Program  
Department of Conservation and Recreation  
[jason.bulluck@dcr.virginia.gov](mailto:jason.bulluck@dcr.virginia.gov)  
600 East Main Street Richmond, Virginia 23219  
(804) 786-8377

The Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, with support from the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation-Division of Natural Heritage, recommends the addition of Peters Mountain mallow (*Iliamna corei* Sherff) to Virginia's list of Species of Greatest Conservation Need as a tier I-A species (Appendix 1).

Justification

Species Summary

*Iliamna corei* (Peters Mountain mallow; G1/S1, Fed LE/State LE) (Appendix 2) was listed as Federally Endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in May 1986 (USFWS, 1986). In addition to its federal status, *Iliamna corei* is ranked G1/S1 (critically imperiled) by NatureServe and the Natural Heritage Network, meaning it is also a high conservation priority at a global scale. This showy member of the Mallow family (Malvaceae) is not only endemic to Virginia but to a small area of Peters Mountain. The sole population occurs on a rocky, forested ridge crest underlain by calcareous sandstone. (VA DCR, 2022). It is threatened by habitat management issues, grazing, recreational impacts, and collection (VA DCR, 2008). Currently, such a tiny population is vulnerable to any number of stochastic events, whether human-caused or natural.

Trends

The single population of *Iliamna corei* was discovered in 1927 and no new populations have been found since, despite extensive surveys of the region. At the time of discovery, the population numbered only 50 plants. By 1985 the population had declined to 5 plants, and by 1992 the species had declined to only three plants. While the exact cause of this dramatic decline is not known, threats to the species include grazing by deer (and in one case, a feral goat), competition with other plants (particularly the Canadian leafcup, *Polymnia canadensis*), shading by trees, the proximity of hiking trails, and fire suppression. (VA DCR, 2008). The Nature Conservancy now owns the property and careful management has led to a steady increase in

population size from a low of less than 20 in the early 2000s to 100 or more in 2015. The largest population size reported was 219 in 2001 (VA DCR, 2022).

#### Conservation Action

Conservation actions recommended for *Iliamna corei* include land management and population monitoring. Propagation and planting are mentioned as possibilities in the recovery plan as well (USFWS, 1990). The species is threatened by lack of disturbance and succession due to fire suppression, over-harvest (collected for cultivation), and grazing by deer and feral livestock (SASVP, 2002; NatureServe, 2022). The Nature Conservancy of Virginia purchased the 398-acre Narrows Preserve specifically to protect and manage *Iliamna corei*. Management and monitoring by the Conservancy and its partners are improving the survival chances of the species. Prescribed burning has been the most obvious driver of plant numbers, increasing the number of individuals substantially through release from competition and by increasing seed germination. Given that population numbers have never risen above the low hundreds, the need for continued management and, more importantly, innovation in management strategies, is critical. Monitoring should be conducted on a regular basis as management efforts continue. It is necessary to understand how population size and vigor are related to habitat change and human impacts if the species is to increase its numbers above such a low level.

#### Summary

*Iliamna corei* (Peters Mountain mallow) is proposed for inclusion in the Virginia State Wildlife Action Plan as a tier I-A species because Virginia has the only known population of this species in the world. While the site supporting the species is currently protected, population size is very small and responsible management and collaboration with conservation partners is imperative for its survival.

**This species occurs only in the New River Valley Regional Commission area.**

## References

NatureServe. 2022. NatureServe Explorer [web application]. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. [https://explorer.natureserve.org/Taxon/ELEMENT\\_GLOBAL.2.155689/Iliamna\\_corei](https://explorer.natureserve.org/Taxon/ELEMENT_GLOBAL.2.155689/Iliamna_corei) [Accessed: November 9, 2022].

Southern Appalachian Species Viability Project (SASVP). 2002. A partnership between the U.S. Forest Service-Region 8, Natural Heritage Programs in the Southeast, NatureServe, and independent scientists to develop and review data on 1300+ regionally and locally rare species in the Southern Appalachian and Alabama region. Database (Access 97) provided to the U.S. Forest Service by NatureServe, Durham, North Carolina.

United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). May 12, 1986. Determination of *Iliamna corei* (Peters Mountain mallow) to be an endangered species. Final Rule. Federal Register Vol. 51 (#91):17343- 46.

United States Fish and Wildlife Service. 1990. Peters Mountain Mallow (*Iliamna corei*) Recovery Plan. Newton Corner, Massachusetts. 30 pp.

Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (VA DCR), Natural Heritage Program Fact Sheet, 2008. Peters Mountain Mallow (*Iliamna corei*) Fact Sheet. <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/document/fsicorei.pdf>

Virginia DCR Natural Heritage Program (VA DCR). 2022. Biotics 5 database. Virginia DCR Natural Heritage Program, Richmond, Virginia.