We evaluated all known potential impacts to the Highlands tiger beetle, including the Act's five threat factors. While these impacts were previously believed to pose imminent or significant threats to the species, and some may have caused losses to individuals or habitat, the updated information we received regarding species' occurrence and population size has improved our understanding on how the stressors affect the status of species. In our current candidate assessment, we evaluated the best available scientific and commercial information, and concluded that the species is resilient to these stressors and that current impacts to the species are not as strong as previously believed. Approximately 43.4 percent of the existing potential suitable habitat for the species is protected conservation lands. While fragmentation of the Lake Wales Ridge scrub and sandhill habitats exists, 63 percent of the Highlands tiger beetle populations occur on these protected conservation lands, including three of the largest known populations. These lands are managed for the scrub habitat and species, including the Highlands tiger beetle, through government and private partnership prescribed burn programs, invasive species control, best management practices, and enforcement and protection of the resources. Fragmentation of the habitat was identified as a stressor compromising the dispersal capabilities of Highlands tiger beetle populations. However, the new information on the number and distribution of occupied sites and population size indicates that the threat to the dispersal capabilities of the species is not as high as previously reported. New sites have been identified in four populations across the north to south range of the species, and the Lake Wales Ridge as a whole has areas of open lands, remnant scrub and sandhill, and patchworks of scrub roadside habitat that can act as corridors or "stepping stones" for Highlands tiger beetle movement and flight, making active migration to new sites or the exchange of individuals between sites feasible for this species. In addition, storm winds, water flow, rafting transport, and animals are possible means of stochastic dispersal of individual beetles.

As a result of the new information and analysis, we no longer consider the threats originally identified in our previous 12-month finding for the Highlands tiger beetle to be current or foreseeable threats for the following reasons: (1) The species is larger in individual numbers and occurs in more

sites across its range than previously documented; (2) the populations occur primarily on protected conservation lands; (3) more than half of the potential suitable habitat for the species consists of protected lands under conservation management, with new conservation lands and conservation banks acquired in 2014; (4) the species occurs in 16 populations across 225,920 acres (91,426 hectares) or 353 square miles (920 square kilometers), and existing unsurveyed suitable habitat occurs in the species' range; (5) new survey information has identified an increased number of sites graded as "high" and "good" quality habitat for the Highlands tiger beetle; (6) the analysis reveals annual prescribed burning schedules are being implemented across the range of the Highlands tiger beetle on government and private conservation lands; and (7) the stressors identified in the 2015 candidate assessment, including collections, occur at the individual level but are not rising to the level of population or species impacts.

Overall, current information from additional surveys indicates an increase in occupied sites with a large increase in the number of beetles. Most threats are being addressed through the presence of large populations of the species occurring on protected lands and through the management actions that occur on these lands. Any actual impact from threats occurs at the individual, not population or species, level, and no impact, individually or cumulatively, rises to the level that it contributes to making the species meet the definition of "threatened species" or "endangered species."

Finding

Based on our review of the best available scientific and commercial information pertaining to the Act's five threat factors, we find that the current stressors acting on the species and its habitat are not of sufficient imminence, intensity, or magnitude to make the Highlands tiger beetle warrant listing throughout the species' range at this time. Because the distribution of the species is relatively stable across its range and stressors are similar throughout the species' range, we found no concentration of stressors that suggests that the Highlands tiger beetle may be in danger of extinction or likely to become so in any portion of its range. With the documentation of 16 newly identified occupied sites, the identification of improved habitat quality, and the existing estimated adult beetle count of over 10,000 individuals in 56 sites, we find that Highlands tiger beetle is no longer in danger of

extinction (endangered) or likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future (threatened) throughout all of its range or any portion of its range. Therefore, we find that listing the Highlands tiger beetle as an endangered or a threatened species is not warranted throughout all or a significant portion of its range at this time, and consequently we are removing this species from candidate status.

As a result of the Service's 2011 multidistrict litigation settlement with the Center for Biological Diversity and WildEarth Guardians, the Service is required to submit a proposed listing rule or a not-warranted 12-month finding to the Federal Register by September 30, 2016 (In re: Endangered Species Act Section 4 Deadline Litigation, No. 10-377 (EGS), MDL Docket No. 2165 (D.D.C. May 10, 2011)), for all 251 species that were included as candidate species in the Service's November 10, 2010, CNOR. This document satisfies the requirements of that settlement agreement for the Highlands tiger beetle, and constitutes the Service's 12-month finding on the May 11, 2004, petition to list the Highlands tiger beetle as an endangered or threatened species. A detailed discussion of the basis for this finding can be found in the Highland tiger beetle's species-specific assessment form and other supporting documents (see ADDRESSES, above).

Dichanthelium (=panicum) hirstii (Hirst Brothers' Panic Grass)

Previous Federal Actions

In 1975, Panicum hirstii (i.e., Dichanthelium hirstii's former scientific name; see Summary of Status Review, below) was 1 of more than 3,000 vascular plants included in a Smithsonian Institution report entitled "Report on Endangered and Threatened Plants of the United States" (Report) that the Service subsequently treated as a petition under the Act (40 FR 27824; July 1, 1975). The Federal Register notice indicated that P. hirstii and the other plants were under consideration for listing, and the notes of endangered or threatened after each species' name solely represented the views of the authors of the Report. The Report indicated that P. hirstii occurred in Georgia and placed it in the endangered category. The Service did not publish another species notice of review until

In 1980, Panicum hirstii was considered a Category 2 candidate species (45 FR 82480; December 15, 1980). Category 2 candidate species were identified as those taxa for which