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News Release



Service Reopens Public Comment Period for Proposals to Give Federal Protections to Three Amphibians and their Habitat

Sacramento - The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is reopening the public comment period for 120 days for the proposal to list the Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog and the northern distinct population segment of the mountain yellow-legged frog as endangered and the Yosemite toad as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The Service is also reopening the public comment period for 120 days for the proposal to designate critical habitat for these three amphibian species in California.

On April 25, 2013, the Service published the two proposals and opened a 60 day public comment period that ended on June 24, 2013. During and after the initial comment period, the Service received significant interest in extending the comment period.

“The public comment period is designed so that the Service can listen to and take into consideration citizens’ concerns and any information the public may submit regarding these species and their habitat,” said Jan Knight, Acting Field Supervisor for the Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office. “This process is important so that any final decision made by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reflects all of the best science and information available. We are reopening the public comment period to ensure the public has adequate opportunity to submit comments.”

The Service will accept comments through November 18, 2013 on the two proposed rules. Comments may be submitted online at the Federal eRulemaking Portal at <http://www.regulations.gov>. The Docket Number for the proposed listing rule is FWS–R8–ES–2012–0100 and for the proposed critical habitat rule is FWS–R8–ES–2012–0074. Comments can also be sent by U.S. mail to:

Public Comments Processing
Attn: FWS–R8–ES–2012–0100 or FWS–R8–ES–2012–0074
Division of Policy and Directives Management
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
4401 N. Fairfax Drive, MS 2042-PDM
Arlington, VA 22203

The Service seeks information regarding any threats to the species and regulations that may address those threats. A detailed outline of the information that the Service is specifically seeking can be found on the Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office’s website at: <http://www.fws.gov/sacramento/outreach/2013/4->

The Service has also received requests to hold public meetings on these proposals. The Service is planning to hold two public meetings and one public hearing, likely in fall 2013. The dates and times of these meetings and hearing will be announced when the draft economic analysis for the proposed critical habitat rule is made available to the public and will be scheduled within the subsequent open public comment period.

The Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog and the northern distinct population segment of the mountain yellow-legged frog are similar in appearance and behavior. They range from 1.5 to 3.25 inches in length and are a mix of brown and yellow, but can also be grey, red, or green-brown. They may have irregular lichen- or moss-like patchiness. Their belly and undersurfaces of the hind limbs are yellow or orange. They produce a distinctive mink or garlic-like odor when disturbed. The two species can be distinguished from each other physically by the ratio of the lower-leg length to snout-vent length.

The Yosemite toad is moderately sized, usually 1.2–2.8 inches in length, with rounded to slightly oval glands, one on each side of the head, which produce toxins to deter some predators. The iris of the eye is dark brown with gold reflective cells.

Frogs and toads feed play an important role in our ecosystem. They feed on insects and are themselves food for other important species such as garter snakes, birds, and even bears. Amphibians, such as these species, play an important role in nutrient recycling. Because amphibian tadpoles live in lakes and streams, but become terrestrial as adults, they are important in transferring energy from the aquatic environment to the terrestrial environment where it is available to terrestrial species such as land birds and mammals.

Both frogs are threatened by disease and by habitat modification associated with the past introduction of non-native trout to fishless waters. Other major threats to the frogs include predation and climate change. The Yosemite toad is threatened by changes in wet meadow habitat associated with past fire management, historic timber management activities, livestock grazing, disease, and climate change.

Recreation use is not considered a significant threat to any of these species.

For more information on these species and this proposal and the information sought, visit www.fws.gov/sacramento.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov/cno. Connect with our Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/usfwspacificsouthwest>, follow our tweets at <http://twitter.com/USFWSPacSWest>, watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our Flickr page at http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfws_pacificsw/

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