



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS: Idaho Springsnail Delisting

What is being announced?

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has determined that the Idaho springsnail no longer needs protection under the Endangered Species Act. It will be removed from the Federal List of Threatened and Endangered Species 30 days from publication of this rule in the *Federal Register*.

The Service made this decision after accepting a new scientific finding that four groups of freshwater springsnails living in Idaho, Oregon, Washington and Wyoming, including the Idaho springsnail, are actually one species, *Pyrgulopsis robusta*.

Because the Idaho springsnail is now considered to be a member of the newly-combined species *Pyrgulopsis robusta*, the Service has determined that taking the Idaho springsnail off the list of threatened and endangered species is warranted.

The Service obtained genetic studies that the Idaho springsnail, which was listed in 1992 as an endangered species, is no longer a separate species and is now grouped with a new species (*P. robusta*). This newly-combined species is distributed over a wider geographic area than in the original listing, and is no longer in need of ESA protection.

On what basis did the Service make this determination?

The Service conducted a status review of the newly-combined species *Pyrgulopsis robusta*. Based on the findings of the status review, the Service published the findings of a 12-month status review on September 28, 2006 which determined that *Pyrgulopsis robusta* does not require protection under the Act and would not be placed in the Federal List of Threatened and Endangered Species.

The Service also published a proposed delisting rule on September 28, 2006 as a result of the status review, noting substantial information existed indicating that delisting the Idaho springsnail may be warranted because of the taxonomic revision that includes the Idaho springsnail as a member of the newly-combined species *Pyrgulopsis robusta*.

What four groups of springsnails are now being classified as one species, *Pyrgulopsis robusta*?

The four groups of springsnails include the Idaho springsnail (*Pyrgulopsis idahoensis*), the Jackson Lake springsnail (*Pyrgulopsis robusta*), the Harney Lake springsnail (*Pyrgulopsis hendersoni*), and the Columbia springsnail (*Pyrgulopsis sp. A*). All four are now considered one species, *Pyrgulopsis robusta*.

Why did the Service conduct a status review of the Idaho springsnail and three other springsnails that occur in Wyoming, Oregon, and Washington?

The ESA requires that if a petition to list or delist a species contains substantial scientific and commercial information suggesting the action may be warranted, the agency must make a finding within 12 months of receiving the petition.

On June 28, 2004, the Service received a petition from the Idaho Governor's Office of Species Conservation and the Idaho Power Company requesting that the Idaho springsnail be delisted based on a recent taxonomic revision of the species.

On August 5, 2004, a second petition was received from Dr. Peter Bowler, the Biodiversity Conservation Alliance, the Center for Biological Diversity, the Center for Native Ecosystems, the Western Watersheds Project, and the Xerces Society, requesting that the four springsnails be listed under the ESA. This listing petition cited habitat loss and degradation from spring development, domestic livestock grazing, and groundwater withdrawal, among other factors, as threats to the continued existence of these three northwestern springsnails.

The listing petition also cited the taxonomic revision and acknowledged that the four springsnails may be one species (*Pyrgulopsis robusta*) but contended that whether assessed individually, or as one species, all four springsnails deserved the protection of the ESA.

On April 20, 2005, the Service determined that both petitions contained substantial information suggesting that delisting the Idaho springsnail or listing all four species may be warranted and initiated a 12-month status review of the springsnail group.

What information did the Service use to make this decision?

The Endangered Species Act requires the agency to consider the best scientific and commercial data available as well as efforts being made by states or other entities to protect a species when making a listing determination. To meet this standard, agency staff systematically collected all the available information on the Idaho, Jackson Lake, Harney Lake, and Columbia springsnails, their habitats, and factors affecting the species from a wide array of sources. The scientific literature on these springsnails is relatively scarce, but the agency received a substantial amount of unpublished information from other federal agencies, states, universities, private industry, and individuals. The agency

compiled all this data and information into a single document, called a draft “Best Available Information,” or BAI document.

Does this decision mean that there is no concern about the future of the species?

No. The Fish and Wildlife Service will continue to monitor the status of *Pyrgulopsis robusta* and will accept additional information and comments from all governmental agencies, the scientific community, industry, or any other interested party concerning the species. If future information demonstrates declines in *P. robusta* populations, the agency may re-initiate a status review of the species to assess its status.

What is being done to conserve *Pyrgulopsis robusta* throughout its range?

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation’s recent spring management guide is the best example of a conservation effort to maintain springsnail habitats and populations. It covers numerous spring species and functions, and specifically discusses springsnail conservation. Aside from this effort, habitat protection in the form of riparian, spring, or stream system maintenance constitutes the primary range-wide conservation action in place to conserve populations of *Pyrgulopsis robusta*. Numerous programs are in place from multiple state and federal agencies that protect and conserve riparian, spring, and stream systems on the lands for which they are responsible.

What is “delisting?” (Section 4 of the ESA)

Delisting is the removal of a species from the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants and can result from a species going extinct, successful recovery efforts, or, a finding, in cases such as the springsnail, that the best available information does not support the original data used to list the species.

Why, when, and how are species removed from the list of endangered and threatened species?

The process of delisting a species may be started by a petition to delist the species, a 5-year review of the species’ status or a review of whether the goals for recovering the species, as outlined in the species’ recovery plan, have been achieved. The Service assesses the species’ status in light of the best available information on population distribution, numbers and trends; seeks advice from a variety of species experts and considers whether any new information indicates that the species no longer warrants listing or, as in the case of the Idaho springsnail, is no longer considered a listable entity, as defined by the Endangered Species Act.

The Service first proposes delisting in the *Federal Register* and then seek the opinion of independent species experts, other federal agencies, state biologists, and the public. After analyzing the comments and information received on the proposal, the Service decides whether to complete the proposed action or maintain the species status as it is. The Service’s final decision is announced in the *Federal Register*. The comments received and the responses to them are addressed in the final rule.