

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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News Release



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Amargosa Toad Warrants Review for Possible Protection Under the Endangered Species Act

LAS VEGAS -- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) today, announced it will conduct an in-depth status review of the Amargosa toad (*Bufo nelsoni*) to determine if it warrants federal protection as a threatened or endangered species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Notice was published today in the *Federal Register*, which opens a 60-day public comment period.

Today's decision, commonly known as a 90-day finding, is based on scientific information about the species provided in a petition requesting listing of the species under the ESA. The Service received the petition, dated February 26, 2008, from the Center for Biological Diversity and Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility requesting that the Amargosa toad be listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA.

“The finding does not mean that the Service has decided it is appropriate to list the Amargosa toad,” said Bob Williams, State Supervisor for the Service’s Nevada Fish and Wildlife Office. “The 90-day finding is the first step in a process that triggers a more thorough review of all the biological information available. We are encouraging the public to submit any relevant information about the toad and its habitat to us for consideration in the comprehensive review.”

The Amargosa toad is a member of the family Bufonidae which includes North American true toads. The species is endemic to Oasis Valley in southern Nye County, Nevada. The historical and current range of the Amargosa toad is estimated to be a 10-mile stretch of the Amargosa River and nearby spring systems roughly between the towns of Springdale and Beatty, Nevada. The amount of known and potential Amargosa toad habitat is estimated at 8,440 acres on both public and private lands.

To ensure this status review is comprehensive, the Service is soliciting information from the public, other concerned governmental agencies, Native American Tribes, the scientific community, industry, or any other interested parties concerning the status of the Amargosa toad. Details on specific information we are seeking is included in the finding.

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Based on the in-depth status review, the Service will issue a 12-month finding on the petition making one of three possible determinations:

- 1) Listing is not warranted, in which case no further action will be taken.
- 2) Listing as threatened or endangered is warranted. In this case, the Service will publish a proposal to list, solicit independent scientific peer review of the proposal, seek input from the public, and consider the input before a final decision about listing the species is made. In general, there is a one-year period between the time a species is proposed and the final decision.
- 3) Listing is warranted but precluded by other, higher priority activities. This means the species is added to the Federal list of candidate species, and the proposal to list is deferred while the Service works on listing proposals for other species that are at greater risk. A warranted but precluded finding requires subsequent annual reviews of the finding until such time as either a listing proposal is published, or a not warranted finding is made based on new information.

The ESA makes it illegal to kill, harm or otherwise "take" a listed species, or to possess, import, export or engage in interstate or international commerce of a listed species without authorization in the form of a permit from the Service. The Act also requires all federal agencies to minimize the impact of their activities on listed species, and directs the Service to work with federal agencies and other partners to develop and carry out recovery efforts for those species. Listing also focuses attention on the needs of the species, encouraging conservation efforts by other agencies (federal, state and local), conservation groups and other organizations and individuals.

Anyone wishing to submit information regarding Amargosa toad may do so by one of the following methods:

- Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the instructions for submitting comments.
- U.S. mail or hand-delivery: Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS-R8-ES-2009-0047; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 222; Arlington, VA 22203.

No e-mails or faxes will be accepted and all information received on <http://www.regulations.gov> will be posted. This generally means the Service will post any personal information you provide us. Comments must be received by November 9, 2009. For more information about the Amargosa toad and this finding, please visit the Service's web site at www.fws.gov/nevada.

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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.