



Nevada Fish and Wildlife Office

Conserving the Biological Diversity of the Great Basin, Eastern Sierra, and Mojave Desert

Questions and Answers Amargosa Toad 12-Month Finding July 20, 2010

Q. What is the Amargosa toad (*Anaxyrus nelsoni*)?

- A. The Amargosa toad is a member of the family Bufonidae, which includes North American true toads. The dorsal (upper) body of the Amargosa toad has three paired rows of wart-like skin projections called tubercles. Their backs have black speckling or asymmetrical spots. Background coloration ranges from almost black to brownish or pale yellow-brown or olive and may vary considerably among individual toads in the same population. A light mid-dorsal stripe occurs along the backbone. The large, wart-like parotid glands located behind the eye are tawny to olive. Underneath, the Amargosa toad is whitish or pale olive with scattered black spots that merge above the legs to form the appearance of “pants.”



Photo: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Q. Where is the Amargosa located?

- A. The species is endemic (found nowhere else) to the Oasis Valley in southern Nye County, Nevada. The historical and current range of the Amargosa toad is estimated to occur along an approximately 10-mile stretch of the Amargosa River and nearby spring systems, roughly between the towns of Springdale and Beatty. The amount of known and potential Amargosa toad habitat is estimated at about 8,440 acres on both public and private lands.

Q. Why did the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) complete a 12-month finding under the Endangered Species Act for the Amargosa toad?

- A. The Service completed a 12-month finding in response to a petition filed by The Center for Biological Diversity and Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility on February 27, 2008, requesting the Service list the Amargosa toad as a threatened or endangered species and designate critical habitat under the Endangered Species Act. The Service completed an initial review or 90-day finding on September 10, 2009, and concluded that the petition contained substantial information supporting the Service to complete this in-depth review (known as a 12-month finding) of the toad's status.

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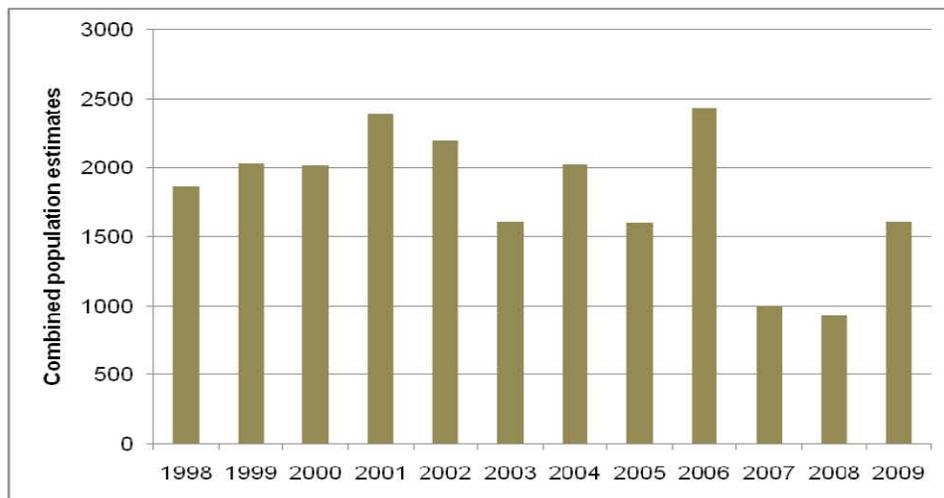
Q. What were the results of the Amargosa toad 12-month finding?

A. In making the finding, the Service reviewed information pertaining to the Amargosa toad in relation to the following five factors: (1) the present or threatened destruction, modification, or curtailment of its habitat or range; (2) overutilization for commercial, recreational, scientific, or educational purposes; (3) disease or predation; (4) the inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms; or (5) other natural or manmade factors affecting its continued existence. The petition listed potential threats to the Amargosa toad as: private land development resulting in habitat loss and water use; groundwater development/extraction; habitat degradation including overgrowth of vegetation; grazing and trampling by livestock; recreation and off-highway vehicle activity; invasive plants species; disease; predation by nonnative bullfrogs, crayfish, and fishes; lack of regulatory control of residential groundwater withdrawal; inadequate protection on privately owned land including lack of a final master plan for the Oasis Valley; small range and population size; climate change; stochastic (random) events; and contaminants. In its finding, the Service concluded that none of these threats, either singularly or in combination, constitute a significant threat to the species that warrants listing as a threatened or endangered species throughout its range.

Q. What is the status of the Amargosa toad?

A. Long-term population monitoring data indicate populations fluctuate locally, but range-wide population estimates for the Amargosa toad remain stable. In 1998, the Nevada Department of Wildlife initiated a long-term population monitoring program for the Amargosa toad using mark-recapture methods at 11 sites of the 18 known sites occupied by the toads (Figure 1). The 2009 population estimate is 1,623 Amargosa toads, which is 13.6 percent less than the average of 1,826 for the period 1998 through 2008.

Figure 1. Nevada Department of Wildlife Amargosa toad population estimates.



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Q. Are there conservation efforts underway to protect the Amargosa toad?

A. Yes. In 1996, the Amargosa Toad Working Group (ATWG) was organized to provide recommendations for management and conservation of the Amargosa toad. The ATWG consists of representatives of the Service, Nevada Department of Wildlife, The Nature Conservancy, Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Bureau of Land Management, Nye County, Beatty Town Board, Beatty Habitat Committee, The Amargosa Conservancy, private landowners in the Beatty community, the University of Nevada at Reno, and others. The Working Group completed the Amargosa Toad Conservation Agreement and Strategy in 2000, and has been implementing actions under this Strategy since that time. This Strategy provides management and conservation guidance for the Amargosa toad. The Working Group is currently updating the Strategy to include accomplishments and updated conservation needs for the toad. The Working Group meets semi-annually to present and exchange information on the Amargosa toad and its habitat including the status of habitat conditions and ongoing habitat projects, potential threats to the toad, population monitoring data, and to identify new conservation tasks.

Q. Where can more information about the Amargosa toad, including copies of the 12-month finding, be found?

A. This finding is available on the Internet at <http://www.regulations.gov> and <http://www.fws.gov/nevada/>. Supporting documents we used in preparation for this finding are available for inspection by appointment, during normal business hours at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Nevada Fish and Wildlife Office, 4701 North Torrey Pines Drive, Las Vegas, NV, 89130; telephone 702/515-5230; facsimile 702/515-5231. Please submit any new information, materials, comments, or questions concerning this finding to the above address or fax.

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