



News Bulletin

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Arizona Ecological Services Field Office

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Fish and Wildlife Service to Consider New Science in Chiricahua Leopard Frog Critical Habitat -Proposal Delayed-

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will postpone the proposal of critical habitat designation for the Chiricahua leopard frog until March 8, 2011. The delay, to accommodate new scientific information, was approved by plaintiffs and U.S. District Court in Arizona in *WildEarth Guardians v. Kenneth Salazar, et al.*

Based on the best scientific and commercial information available to us, we will propose critical habitat units and define the physical or biological features essential to the conservation of the Chiricahua leopard frog in Arizona and New Mexico. The Chiricahua leopard frog recovery plan and survey data will inform our delineations and help us define physical or biological features. Public and stakeholder comments on the proposed rule will be accepted during a formal comment period, the details of which will be outlined in the proposed rule.

Critical habitat is a term in the Endangered Species Act that identifies geographic areas containing features essential for the conservation of a threatened or endangered species, and which may require special management considerations or protection. Designation of critical habitat does not affect land ownership, establish a refuge or preserve and has no impact on private landowners taking actions on their land that do not require federal funding or permits.

Critical habitat helps to delineate key areas for conservation of the species. Once designated, federal actions that may affect critical habitat will require interagency consultation with the Service. If the Chiricahua leopard frog is already present in a critical habitat area, consultation will normally be required if adverse effects may occur, regardless of the designation. On non-federal lands designated as critical habitat, consultation is not required, unless a federal action (e.g. federal funding, permitting, or project) is proposed on those non-federal lands. During consultation we work with the federal action agency to incorporate measures that minimize adverse effects while allowing the proposed project to proceed.

A [May 6, 2009, court order](#) had required the Service to publish a critical habitat proposal for the frog by Dec. 8, 2010.

Additional information on the Chiricahua leopard frog is available at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/CLF.htm> and the Chiricahua leopard frog recovery program web site is at http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/CLF_Recovery_Home.htm.

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.

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