

**NEWS RELEASE
U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
IDHO FISH AND WILDLIFE OFFICE
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jeff Foss, 208-378-5243

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Proposes to Remove ESA Protection
For Utah Valvata Snail**

Public encouraged to comment on recommendation to delist the aquatic species

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today proposed to remove the Utah valvata snail (*Valvata utahensis*) from the federal List of Threatened and Endangered Wildlife, based on new information showing the snail is more widely distributed and occurs in more habitat types than was known at the time the species was listed as endangered in 1992.

The Service is accepting comments on its proposal until September 14, 2009.

The Service's proposal follows a 12-month review of the species, initiated by a petition to delist the Utah valvata snail filed by the Governor of Idaho and attorneys for several Idaho irrigation districts. Based on a thorough review of available information the Service found that the species is not in danger of extinction or likely to become so in the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range. Therefore, it no longer needs the protection of the federal Endangered Species Act.

"We reviewed the best available scientific data, conducted peer review on that information, completed a structured decision-making workshop and now have an improved understanding of threats," said Jeff Foss, State Supervisor of the Service's Idaho Fish and Wildlife Office. "The weight of the evidence indicates the species is not in danger of extinction, nor is it likely to become endangered in the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range."

Additional surveys since the Utah valvata snail was listed show that its known geographic range in the Snake River has been extended over 120 river miles. Furthermore, the species persists in reservoirs and habitats influenced by dam operations. Originally thought to require free-flowing cool-water environments, new scientific information indicates the snail occurs in a variety of aquatic habitats, including spring outflows, the mainstem of the river and in reservoir/impounded Snake River reaches, in a wide range of water temperatures.

Although the non-native New Zealand mudsnail has invaded many areas occupied by Utah valvata snails, presence of New Zealand mudsnails in shared habitats has not resulted in the documented loss of local Utah valvata snail populations from any portion of their range after 20 years of co-existence.

Comments on the proposed delisting rule must be received by September 14, 2009. Requests for a public hearing must be received by August 31, 2009. Such requests must be made in writing and addressed to the State Supervisor, Idaho Fish and Wildlife Office, 1387 S. Vinnell Way, Room 368, Boise, Idaho 83709.

The public is encouraged to submit comments on this new information by 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: RIN 1018-AW16; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 222; Arlington, VA 22203.

All comments will be posted on <http://www.regulations.gov>. This generally means we will post any personal information provided to us. Refer to Public Comments section in this rule for more information about the public comment process.

For further information, please contact Jeff Foss, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Idaho Fish and Wildlife Office, 1387 S. Vinnell Way, Suite 368, Boise, Idaho 83709, 208-378-5243.

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