

NEWS RELEASE

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE Mountain-Prairie Region 134 Union Boulevard Lakewood, Colorado 80228

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to Initiate Status Review of Eastern Population of Boreal Toad

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) announced today that it has completed its evaluation of a petition requesting the agency list either the Eastern population or Southern Rocky Mountain population of the boreal toad as a threatened or endangered distinct population segment (DPS) under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

The Service determined that substantial biological information exists to warrant a more in-depth examination of the status of the Eastern population of the boreal toad. However, the petition did not present substantial information that the Southern Rocky Mountain population, which is contained within the larger Eastern population, may be warranted for listing.

The Service will conduct a full status review of the Eastern population, and once the review is complete, determine whether to propose adding the population as a DPS to the Federal lists of threatened or endangered wildlife and plants. The Eastern population of the boreal toad occurs in portions of Colorado, Idaho, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah, and Wyoming while the Southern Rocky Mountain population includes New Mexico, Colorado, and southeastern Wyoming.

The Service'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 petition and documents provided substantial information, based on recent genetic studies, that the Eastern population of the boreal toad may qualify as a DPS, and that it may be threatened by chytrid fungus, a disease that can be lethal to amphibians. Information in the petition also indicated that isolation and small population size may make the species more vulnerable to habitat loss or fragmentation, or other human or environmental factors (such as disease), random events, or genetic problems.

The finding on the petition does not mean the Service has decided it is appropriate to list the Eastern population of the boreal toad. Rather, this finding is the first step in a process to trigger a more thorough review of all the biological information available.

To ensure the status review is comprehensive, we are soliciting information from State and Federal natural resource agencies and all interested parties regarding the Eastern population of the boreal toad and its habitat.

Based on the status review, we will make one of three possible determinations:

- 1) Protection under the ESA is not warranted, in which case no further action will be taken.
- 2) Protection under the ESA as threatened or endangered is warranted. In this case, the Service will publish a proposal to add the population to the list of threatened and endangered species, 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. Generally, the final decision is made one year after the species is proposed.
- 3) Protection under the ESA is warranted but precluded by 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.

For more information about the Eastern population of the boreal toad and this finding, please visit the Service's website: <http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/amphibians/borealtoad>. For public domain imagery of the species, please visit this flickr gallery: <http://bit.ly/Hgbucu>.

Anyone wishing to submit information regarding the Eastern population of the boreal toad may do so by writing to Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS-R6-ES-2012-0003; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, MS 2042-PDM; Arlington, VA 22203 or by electronic mail to <http://www.regulations.gov>. After accessing the regulations.gov website, in the box that reads "Enter Keyword or ID," enter the docket number for this finding stated above. Check the box that reads "Open for Comment/Submission," and click the Search button. Comments must be received by June 11, 2012.

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