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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Continues to Seek Northern Leopard Frog Information

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is requesting more input from the public before making a decision on whether to provide protections for the western population of the northern leopard frog under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The Service has extended the period during which it will accept information on this subject through Nov. 27, 2009.

On June 30, the Service announced that its review of a petition seeking to add the western population of the northern leopard frog to the list of animals protected under the ESA indicated that the frog population may warrant federal protection as a threatened or endangered species. The finding triggered a more detailed status assessment of the frog population to determine whether protection of the northern leopard frog throughout its 19 western states range is needed. The Service appealed to land managers, states, Tribes and researchers for information about the northern leopard frog to inform its status assessment and listing determination. Information is again being requested.

The status assessment will inform the Service's determination as to whether the population warrants protection under the Act. If warranted, the Service will propose listing or may defer listing while it works on listing proposals for other species that are at greater risk.

The Service is seeking scientific information on the historical and current status and distribution of the northern leopard frog; its biology and ecology; its taxonomy (particularly genetics of western U.S., Wisconsin and Canada populations); ongoing conservation measures for the species and its habitat; and threats to the species and its habitat. If listing the northern leopard frog is warranted in all or a portion of its range, the Service intends to propose critical habitat to the extent prudent and determinable and therefore also requests information on what may constitute physical or biological features essential to the conservation of the species; where these features are currently found; whether any of these features may require special management considerations or protection; and whether there are areas outside the geographical area occupied by the species that are essential to the conservation of the species.

Scientific information will be accepted until Nov. 27, 2009, and can be submitted electronically via the Federal eRulemaking Portal at: <http://www.regulations.gov>, or can be mailed or hand delivered to Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS-R2-ES-2009-0030; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 222; Arlington, VA 22203.

The petition seeks protection for the northern leopard frog in Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. The northern leopard frog is now considered uncommon in a large portion of its range in the western United States, and declines of the species have been documented in most western states. The range of the western population extends into the Canadian provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, southern Northwest Territories, Saskatchewan and western Ontario.

Additional information regarding the frog and status assessment, including the June finding, news release, range map and FAQs are available at: http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/Northern_Frog.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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Note to editors:

Photo support is available by contacting Jeff Humphrey at (602) 242-0210 or on the Internet at:

<http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/Amphibians.htm>

Northern leopard frog vocalizations are available at:

<http://www.californiaherps.com/frogs/pages/r.pipiens.sounds.html>

Range map of the petitioned northern leopard frog population is at:

http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/Northern_Frog.htm