



News Release

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www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/

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Northern Leopard Frog in West May Warrant Federal Protection

The western population of the northern leopard frog may warrant federal protection as a threatened or endangered species, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) announced today. The announcement is the result of an initial review of a petition seeking to protect the northern leopard frog throughout its 19 western states range under the Endangered Species Act.

The Service will undertake a more thorough, scientific review of the species to determine whether to propose adding the northern leopard frog population in 19 states west of the Mississippi River and Great Lakes to the federal list of threatened and endangered species.

The petition provided substantial information suggesting that the western U.S. population is genetically distinct from the eastern northern leopard frog. Under the Endangered Species Act, animal populations that are discrete, significant and threatened can be considered for protection. The northern leopard frog is experiencing threats from habitat loss, disease, non-native species, pollution and climate change that individually and cumulatively have resulted in population declines, local extinctions and disappearance from vast areas of its historical range in the western U.S. and Canada.

To ensure this status review is comprehensive, the Service is soliciting information from state, tribal and federal natural resource agencies and all interested parties. The status assessment will serve as the basis for the Service's determination as to whether the population warrants protection under the Act. If warranted, the Service will either propose listing or may defer listing while it works on listing proposals for other species that are at greater risk.

The Service is now 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 the western U.S., Wisconsin and Canada populations); ongoing conservation measures involving the species and its habitat; and threats to the species and its habitat. If listing the northern leopard frog is warranted, the Service intends to propose critical habitat to the extent prudent and determinable and is also requesting 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 Aug. 31, 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 northern leopard frog is a smooth-skinned green, brown, or sometimes yellow-green frog covered with large, oval dark spots, each of which is surrounded by a lighter halo. Adult body lengths range from 2 to 4.5 inches.

The northern leopard frog requires a mosaic of habitats to meet the requirements of all of its life stages and breeds in a variety of aquatic habitats that include slow-moving or still water along streams and rivers, wetlands, permanent or temporary pools, beaver ponds, and human-constructed habitats such as earthen stock tanks and borrow pits. Subadult northern leopard frogs typically migrate to feeding sites along the borders of larger, more permanent bodies of water and recently-metamorphosed frogs will move up and down drainages and across land in an effort to locate new breeding areas.

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.

The Center for Native Ecosystems and seven other environmental organizations submitted the petition to the Service in June 2006. The Service delayed its response to the petition while involved with court orders and settlement agreements for listing actions and listing efforts for other species considered in need of more immediate protection. The Service, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Forest Service, as well as many agencies, have been monitoring and conducting conservation efforts for the northern leopard frog since 1999.

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 (602-242-0210 at 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.html