

News Release



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Successful Conservation Effort Keeps Great Basin Population of Columbia Spotted Frogs Off Endangered Species List

RENO – The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) determined today that the Great Basin Distinct Population Segment (DPS) of the Columbia spotted frog (*Rana luteiventris*), a small, highly aquatic frog found in northern Nevada, southeastern Oregon and southwestern Idaho, does not warrant federal protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

The Service decided to remove the frog from the ESA candidate species list after an analysis of the best available scientific and commercial data gathered over the past 22 years by a committed group of federal, state and local conservation partners demonstrated proof that threats impacting the species are not as widespread throughout its range as previously thought, and that its populations are much more varied and robust than what was previously known.



Columbia spotted frog. (USFWS photo, Kristin Lohr)

“Sound science conducted by our conservation partners starting as early as 2003 to learn more about the Columbia spotted frog DPS has shown us that this tenacious amphibian is not only persisting, but thriving throughout its Great Basin home,” said Ted Koch, Reno Fish and Wildlife Office Field Supervisor. “The collaborative teamwork between agencies and with our state and local partners to implement a long-term comprehensive conservation strategy demonstrates a model commitment to ground-level conservation that will continue to protect the frog and its habitat as well as benefit many other Great Basin aquatic species well into the future.”

Columbia spotted frogs are slim-waisted and long-legged amphibians with webbed hind feet, and usually with a pair of dorsolateral folds (glandular folds) that extend from behind the eyes to the lower back. Adult Columbia spotted frogs measure between two and four inches with females being larger than males. Its color is light brown, dark brown, or gray, with small spots. The frog’s habitat stretches throughout the Great Basin, northern Rocky Mountains, British Columbia and southeast Alaska. However, genetic research supported that frogs found throughout southeastern Oregon, southwestern Idaho, and northeastern and central Nevada were a distinct population and therefore classified as the Great Basin DPS, which was considered by the Service to be a candidate for ESA protection in 1993. Threats to the frog include improper

livestock grazing, watershed spring development, mining, beaver harvest, nonnative fish and amphibian predators, disease and climate change.

Significant conservation efforts have been occurring in many areas across the range of the Columbia spotted frog in the past decade. In Nevada, a 10-year Conservation Agreement and Strategy (CAS) was developed and implemented in 2003 for the Toiyabe Mountains and the state's northeast populations. Due to the success of that strategy, a revised agreement was signed in February 2015 to protect the frog for an additional 10 years. In 2006, a Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances was developed between private landowners and the Service for a frog population in Idaho.

The increase in monitoring work that was conducted as a result of the conservation strategy has improved the partners' knowledge of the distribution of the species as well as improved knowledge of its demography of the frog in several populations. In addition, improved grazing management (reduced stocking rates, reduced utilization levels, rest rotation practices) has also contributed to improved stream and riparian habitat in some areas. Restoring and creating new pond habitat areas have also improved numerous occupied frog sites throughout the Great Basin as well as other parts of the species' range.

Beaver are also important for the creation of small pools with slow-moving water that function as habitat for frog reproduction as well as for creating wet meadows that provide foraging habitat and protective vegetation cover. Proactive Beaver management by the states involved will be important for the long-term survival of Columbia spotted frogs. Nevada, Oregon and Idaho all include the Columbia spotted frog on their list of protected species. The sum total of effective conservation management efforts by partner organizations to reduce threats combined with ongoing collected data that continues to indicate higher population numbers have assured the Service that the species can persist in the Great Basin without the need for federal regulation.

Conservation partners that were signatories to the Columbia spotted frog CAS in Nevada include Nye County in Nevada, University of Nevada Cooperative Extension, Nevada Department of Wildlife, Nevada Natural Heritage Program, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

For more detailed information on Columbia spotted frog and its habitat, along with more information about conservation projects that are being done to help protect this unique species, visit www.fws.gov/cno.

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