

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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News Release



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Critical Habitat Designated for Three Sierra Amphibians

Designation helps recover threatened frogs & streamline federal land activities permit process

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has designated critical habitat for three Sierra amphibian species – Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog, mountain yellow-legged frog, and Yosemite toad. All three were listed in 2014 as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Designation of critical habitat for these species is designed to assist with their recovery. Most of the critical habitat for the frogs is on federal land, with significant overlap lands designated for each species.

The total acreage the Service identified as required to recover the three species is 1,812,164 acres. Based on more than 800 comments received during the two comment periods and numerous public meetings, the total area designated was reduced by 23,229 acres.

The Service also released the final economic analysis of the critical habitat designation, with the projected cost for all three species between \$760,000 and \$1,700,000 over the next 20 years. These are primarily for consultations and updated analyses conducted by federal agencies.

“The designation of critical habitat is an essential, final step in the listing process that will not only help us better conserve these imperiled species but recover and delist them,” said Jennifer Norris, Ph.D., field supervisor, Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office. “The Service has been working diligently with our partners, including the Forest Service and the state of California, to ensure both effective conservation and continued multiple uses of our public land.”

The critical habitat designation will streamline the permit process for nine federal forests and assist the California Department of Fish and Wildlife with fish stocking efforts. It may also be used to better focus efforts undertaken by the National Park Service and others to help these species survive chytrid fungus—a disease that is decimating amphibian populations worldwide.

Frog Species Designations

Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog: The critical habitat for this species includes lands within California’s Lassen, Butte, Plumas, Sierra, Nevada, Placer, El Dorado, Amador, Calaveras, Alpine, Tuolumne, Mono, Mariposa, Madera, and Fresno counties. This area represents approximately 18 percent of the historical range of the species. Land ownership consists of 1,002,633 acres of public lands and 79,481 acres of privately owned

lands. Of the federal lands, 71 percent are in designated wilderness areas, the highest level of conservation protection for federal lands.

Northern DPS of the Mountain yellow-legged frog: The critical habitat for this species includes lands within California's Fresno and Tulare counties. This area represents approximately 9 percent of the historical range of the species. Land ownership consists of 221,474 acres of public lands and 24 acres of privately owned lands. Of the federal lands, 98 percent are in designated wilderness.

Yosemite toad: The critical habitat for this species includes lands within California's Alpine, Tuolumne, Mono, Mariposa, Madera, Fresno, and Inyo counties. Land ownership consists of 746,548 acres of public lands and 4,376 acres of privately owned lands. Of federal lands, 75 percent are in designated wilderness areas.

Land use in the designated critical habitat areas consists primarily of high-elevation wilderness and forested lands with multiple uses, including recreation, fire and timber management, livestock grazing, and mining. Recreational activities in these areas should not significantly threaten the recovery of these species.

Identifying critical habitat does not create a refuge, alter land use, or change ownership. Activities on private lands that do not require federal permits or receive funding are not affected by a critical habitat designation. Critical habitat contains the physical or biological features essential to the conservation of the species, or is otherwise essential for the conservation of the species. A critical habitat designation requires federal agencies to consider the needs of the species when they authorize, fund, or carry out a project on lands designated as critical habitat.

The Final Rule designating critical habitat for the Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog, the mountain yellow-legged frog, and the Yosemite toad is available for public inspection today at: <https://www.federalregister.gov/public-inspection>

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/Sacramento. Connect with our [Facebook page](#), follow our [tweets](#), watch our [YouTube channel](#), and download photos from our [Flickr page](#).

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