

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT THE 90-DAY FINDING AND INITIATION OF THE STATUS REVIEW FOR FOUR SPRINGSNAIL SPECIES

Q: What action is the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service undertaking?

The Service has completed its findings on two petitions: One petition seeks to remove the Idaho springsnail (*Pyrgulopsis idahoensis*) from the federal list of threatened and endangered species. The other petition asks that Endangered Species Act protection be given to three other snail species: the Jackson Lake springsnail (*Pyrgulopsis robusta*), the Harney Lake springsnail (*Pyrgulopsis hendersoni*) and the Columbia springsnail (*Pyrgulopsis spp. A*).

The Service believes that substantial scientific information was presented in both petitions and as a result, the agency will begin a comprehensive 12-month status review of all four species.

Q: Where are these snails found?

The Idaho springsnail occurs in the Snake River near the C.J. Strike Reservoir in Idaho. The Jackson Lake springsnail occurs in cold springs in and around Jackson Lake, Wyoming; the Harney Lake springsnail is found in eastern Oregon; and the Columbia springsnail occurs along the lower Columbia River in Washington and Oregon.

Q: What do these snails look like?

Springsnails are tiny snails that live near springs or the banks of rivers. Their small shells have a conical, whorled shape that can be pale pink to tan colored. Fossil records show that the Idaho springsnail is one of the few species that survived ancient Lake Idaho, which existed in southwestern Idaho about 3.5 million years ago.

Q: When was the Idaho springsnail listed and why?

The Idaho springsnail was listed as an endangered species on December 14, 1992. The primary threat to the species was deteriorating water quality in the free-flowing, cool water environments required by the species. Deterioration in water quality was due to reservoir development, river diversions, and habitat modification.

Q: What are the details of the petition to de-list the Idaho springsnail ?

In 2001, the Service and U.S. Bureau of Reclamation jointly funded research regarding the life history and ecology of the species. The Idaho Governor's Office of Species Conservation and Idaho Power Company re-submitted a petition on June 28, 2004, to delist the Idaho springsnail. The Bureau of Reclamation submitted a letter of support for the petition. The petition includes a peer-reviewed report by Dr. Robert Hershler that suggests it is prudent to revise the taxonomic status of the Idaho springsnail to reflect its similarity to the subgenus *Natricola* (Hershler and Liu 2004). The suggested taxonomic revision would place the Idaho springsnail, the Jackson Lake springsnail (*Pyrgulopsis robusta*), the Harney Lake springsnail (*Pyrgulopsis hendersoni*), and the Columbia springsnail (*Pyrgulopsis spp. A*) into one species, *Pyrgulopsis robusta*.

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Q: What is the status of the other springsnails discussed in the taxonomic revision?

None of the other springsnails is listed as threatened or endangered. However, on August 5, 2004, the Service received a petition from a group of academics and environmental organizations to list the Jackson Lake springsnail, Harney Lake springsnail, and Columbia springsnail, based on habitat degradation and threats from nonnative species. The petitioners acknowledge that the four springsnails may be one species (*P. robusta*). The listing petition states that whether assessed individually or as one species, all four springsnails need the protection of the Act.

Q: What is a 12-Month Status Review?

The Service believes that substantial scientific information was presented in both petitions and that further study of the four snail species is warranted. Under the petition process, a comprehensive status review, called a 12-month status review, follows a positive 90-day petition finding. This review will examine whether the petitioned actions are warranted.

Q. What is a Five Year Review?

A status review is also required once every 5-years for all ESA listed species. Because of this, the Service has elected to prepare these two reviews for the Idaho springsnail simultaneously. The purpose of a 5-year review is to ensure that listed species have the appropriate level of protection under the Act. The 5-year review process will evaluate population data, factors affecting the species, and ongoing conservation measures.

Q. What information is the Service seeking during the 60-day comment period?

The public comment period is being opened to solicit comments and information about the species' status. The Service is soliciting new scientific or commercial information from the public, including new information that has become available since its listing. Such information may include but is not limited to: species biology; population trends, distribution, abundance, demographics and genetics; habitat conditions (amount, distribution, and suitability); conservation measures; impacts to the species and trends; and any other new information, data, or corrections such as taxonomic or nomenclature changes, identification of erroneous information contained in the list, and improved analytical methods.

Q: What happens if new scientific information is presented during the public comment period?

Our analysis of the information submitted with the delisting petition, or other new information acquired during the public comment period, may indicate that a change in the Idaho springsnail's classification is warranted. Changes may include de-listing or down-listing from endangered to threatened but any change would occur only through a formal rule-making process, including public review and comment, as defined in section 4(a) of the Act. No change in status of the species may occur until that process is complete.

Q: How do I submit information to be considered in the review?

Information and comments may be submitted in writing to: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Snake River Fish and Wildlife Office, 1387 S. Vinnell Way, Room 368, Boise, Idaho 83709. Comments may also be faxed to 208-378-5262, or e-mailed to fwlrboccomment@fws.gov. Please include "Idaho springsnail Review Comments" in the title line for faxes and e-mails. If our Internet connection is disrupted, please submit your comments by mail or fax to the contact office above.

Q: When should information be submitted?

In order to allow the Service adequate time to consider information, it must be received no later than June 20, 2005.

Q: Will submissions be available to the public after the review?

Information received in response to this notice, and review results, will be available for public inspection by appointment during normal business hours at the above Service address.

Q. Who should I contact for more information about the Idaho springsnail?

Contact: Jeri Wood, 1387 S. Vinnell Way, Room 368, Boise, Idaho 83709, 208-378-5243,
fax 208-378-5262.