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Snake River Basin
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News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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BRUNEAU HOT SPRINGSNAIL CLASSIFICATION REMAINS UNCHANGED

Groundwater Use Actions May Advance Conservation of the Species

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service published today its 5-year Review of the Bruneau hot springsnail, (*Pyrgulopsis bruneauensis*), a mollusk that has been federally protected as an endangered species under the Endangered Species Act since 1993.

The ESA requires the Service to review the status of listed species at least once every five years to ensure that the listing is still accurate. A 5-year Review considers all new scientific and commercial information concerning the population status of the species and the threats it faces. The review considers information that has become available since the original listing determination, such as species biology, habitat conditions, conservation measures, threats, and other new information or corrections such as changes in taxonomy or nomenclature.

The tiny springsnail (about 2 mm) is only found in geothermal springs and seeps along an 8-kilometer length of the Bruneau River in Southwest Idaho. It prefers wetted rock faces of springs and flowing water, with large cobbles and boulders. The principal threat to the Bruneau hot springsnail is the reduction and/or elimination of geothermal habitat as a result of groundwater withdrawal, primarily for agriculture. Temperature in the springs is the predominant factor that determines the springsnail's distribution and abundance; the springsnail requires constant springwater temperatures to survive.

The 5-year Review for the Bruneau hot springsnail concludes that the original listing classification as endangered remains unchanged. The threats that were present at the time of the springsnail's listing remain today. Groundwater levels are not stable or increasing, and a decline in the number of geothermal springs occupied by the springsnail has also occurred. Bruneau hot springsnail populations show declining trends, and connectivity between the remaining colonies has been reduced. Current conservation measures are falling short of addressing the highest-ranking threats to the species.

Snake River Fish and Wildlife Office Field Supervisor Jeff Foss said, "Despite previous conservation efforts, threats to the Bruneau hot springsnail persist and it is in danger of extinction. We are working with the State of Idaho and other partners in conservation, including private landowners, toward the shared goal of reducing threats and ultimately recovering this species so that it no longer needs protection under the ESA."

Conservation actions include:

- Implement actions to increase and stabilize geothermal water levels.

These actions might include:

- voluntary conservation easements (lease/purchase water rights),
- and possibly compensation for reduced use of the aquifer (reduce water withdrawals from the geothermal aquifer)
- Continued monitoring of water levels and snail distribution
- Habitat restoration efforts near Hot Creek (including barriers)
- Control of non-native fish known to prey upon the springsnail
- Ensure that regulatory measures are adequate to permanently protect the springsnail from future groundwater reduction

For more information about the Bruneau hot springsnail and conservation opportunities, please contact Jeff Foss, Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1387 S. Vinnell Way, Room 368, Boise, Idaho 83709, telephone 208-378-5243.

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The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 97-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 547 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

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