

News Release



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November 10, 2010

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Releases Annual List of Candidates for Endangered Species Act - Includes Two Arizona Snail Updates-

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) today released its Candidate Notice of Review, a yearly appraisal of the current status of plants and animals considered candidates for protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). One species has been removed from candidate status, five have been added, and four have a change in priority from the last review conducted in November of 2009. There are now 251 species recognized by the Service as candidates for ESA protection.

“The candidate list offers the Service and our partners a unique opportunity to address the threats to these species through voluntary conservation efforts on public and private lands,” said Acting Service Director Rowan Gould. “We will continue working to reduce the number of candidate species by developing conservation agreements that reduce or eliminate the threats they face, and by listing species that warrant protection under the Endangered Species Act as soon as possible.”

Candidate species are plants and animals for which the Service has enough information on their status and the threats they face to propose them as threatened or endangered, but developing a proposed listing rule is precluded by higher priority listing actions. Candidate species do not receive protection under the ESA, although the Service works to conserve them. The annual review and identification of candidate species provides landowners and resource managers notice of species in need of conservation, allowing them to address threats and work to preclude the need to list the species. The Service is currently working with landowners and partners to implement voluntary conservation agreements covering 5 million acres of habitat for more than 130 candidate species.

Today’s notice identifies five new candidate species: the Kentucky arrow darter (KY); Rosemont talussnail (AZ); Kenk’s amphipod (DC, MD); Packard’s milkvetch (ID); and the Vandenberg monkeyflower (CA). All candidates are assigned a listing priority number based on the magnitude and imminence of the threats they face. When adding species to the list of threatened or endangered species, the Service addresses species with the highest listing priority first. The four changes in priority announced in today’s notice are based on new information in the updated assessments of continuing

candidates. These changes include one species that increased in priority and three that lowered in priority, including the Page springsnail found in Arizona's Verde Valley.

The one species removed from the candidate list is a mammal from California — the Palm Springs roundtail ground squirrel. The Service removed this species after a review of the information found that it does not face threats to an extent that ESA protection is needed.

The Service is soliciting additional information on these candidate species, as well as information on other species that may warrant protection under the Endangered Species Act. This information will be valuable in preparing listing documents and future revisions or supplements to the candidate notice of review. Adding each candidate species to the list of species protected under the ESA will require a formal proposal, public comment, consideration of public comment, a final rule and consideration of critical habitat.

The Service has several tools for protecting candidate species and their habitats, including a grants program that funds conservation projects by private landowners, states and territories. In addition, the Service can enter into Candidate Conservation Agreements (CCAs), formal agreements between the Service and one or more public or private parties to address the conservation needs of proposed or candidate species, or species likely to become candidates, before they actually become listed as endangered or threatened. CCA participants voluntarily commit to implementing specific actions removing or reducing the threats to these species, thereby contributing to stabilizing or restoring the species. Through 110 CCAs, habitat for more than 100 species is managed on federal, state, local agency, tribal and private lands; many CCAs have multiple cooperators focusing conservation actions in an area supporting a single or multiple species. Another similar tool is the Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAAs). While these voluntary agreements are only between the Service and non-Federal landowners, they have the same goals as CCAs in addressing threats to candidate species, but with additional incentives for conservation actions on non-Federal lands. More than 60 landowners in 15 states have enrolled over 1 million acres of habitat for 39 species.

Arizona Species

The Rosemont talussnail is a land snail known from three talus slopes in the Santa Rita Mountains, Pima County, Ariz. The primary threat to Rosemont talussnail is hard rock mining. The entire range of the species is located on patented mining claims and can reasonably be expected to be subjected to mining activities in the foreseeable future. Since mining may occur across the entire range of the species within the foreseeable future, potentially resulting in rangewide habitat destruction and population losses, the threats are of a high magnitude. However, mining on patented mining claims, although a reasonably anticipated action, is neither currently ongoing nor imminent. Although the Rosemont Copper Mine is scheduled to commence as soon as 2011, there exists uncertainty regarding its scope, and therefore its potential effect on habitat of the Rosemont talussnail. Accordingly, overall threats to the Rosemont talussnail are nonimminent and it has been assigned a listing priority number of 5 (scale of 1 (highest threats) to 12 (lowest threats)).

The Page springsnail is an aquatic snail restricted to the Upper Verde River drainage of central Arizona. Current populations exist within a complex of at least eight springs located within an approximately one mile area along the west side of Oak Creek around the community of Page Springs. Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) management plans for snail habitat at Bubbling Ponds

and Page Springs fish hatcheries include commitments to replace lost habitat and to monitor remaining Page springsnail populations. The AGFD and the Service recently entered into a Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances that calls for evaluating the restoration and creation of natural springhead integrity, including springs on AGFD properties and several conservation measures have already been implemented. Historically, a population was found at Tavasci Marsh just east of Clarkdale; though that population is now believed to be extirpated, the National Park Service recently acquired the area and has expressed an interest in restoring natural springhead integrity to that site. These efforts are reducing the magnitude of threats and the chances of extirpation or extinction. As a result, the listing priority number for the Page springsnail has been changed from a two to an eight.

There are 22 candidate species in Arizona.

The complete notice and list of proposed and candidate species appears in the *Federal Register* and can be found online at <http://www.fws.gov/endangered/what-we-do/cnor.html>.

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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A complete list of candidate species in Arizona is available by contacting Jeff Humphrey at jeff_humphrey@fws.gov or 602/242-0210 x222.