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Service Proposes Adding Austin Blind Salamander to the Barton Springs Salamander Recovery Plan

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) announces the availability of a draft addendum to the 2005 Barton Springs salamander Recovery Plan to include the Austin blind salamander. The public will have 60 days to review and comment on the proposed addendum.

By supplementing the Barton Springs salamander Recovery Plan with the draft addendum for the Austin blind salamander, we believe we can more efficiently and effectively recover the Austin blind salamander. The Austin blind salamander was federally listed as an endangered species on August 20, 2013. The Barton Springs and Austin blind salamanders share the same habitat, have similar biological needs and face similar threats. The Barton Springs Salamander Recovery Plan, finalized in 2005, was developed to address the Barton Springs ecosystem as a whole as well as threats to both salamander species. Therefore, with the draft addendum, we believe that the Barton Springs salamander Recovery Plan will provide a recovery strategy that is appropriate for the Austin blind salamander as well.

The Service encourages the public to comment on the draft addendum. In particular, we are interested in additional information regarding the appropriateness of the draft recovery criteria and recovery actions for the Austin blind salamander as well as the costs associated with implementing the recommended recovery actions for the Austin blind salamander. Comments must be provided by September 8, 2015, and may be submitted in writing by either:

- **U.S. Mail:** Adam Zerrenner, Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 10711 Burnet Road, Suite 200, Austin, Texas 78758; or
- **Hand Delivery:** Austin Ecological Services Field Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 10711 Burnet Road, Suite 200, Austin, Texas 78758

The Austin blind salamander is entirely aquatic and dependent upon water from the Edwards Aquifer for its survival, growth, and reproduction. The Austin blind salamander resides in the Barton Springs Segment of the Edwards Aquifer. The most significant threat to the salamander species is the degradation of habitat in the form of reduced water quality and quantity. Water quality and quantity in the Edwards Aquifer are being negatively impacted by increasing urbanization and human population growth in areas that flow to where the salamanders are found.

Recovery plans are guidance and do not obligate the Service or potential partners to undertake the work described in them. However, partnerships are critical for timely implementation of actions required for recovery. The objective of an agency recovery plan is to provide a framework for the recovery of a species so that protection under the Endangered Species Act is no longer necessary. A recovery plan considers scientific information about the species and provides criteria and actions necessary to be able to reclassify the species to threatened status or remove it from the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants. Recovery plans help guide our recovery efforts by describing actions we consider necessary for the species' conservation and by estimating time and costs for implementing needed recovery measures.

America's fish, wildlife and plant resources belong to all of us, and ensuring the health of imperiled species is a shared responsibility. The Service is working to actively engage conservation partners and the public in the search for improved and innovative ways to conserve and recover imperiled species.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service works with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. For more information, visit www.fws.gov, or connect with us through any of these social media channels:



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