



News Release

Public Affairs Office
PO Box 1306
Albuquerque, NM 87103
505/248-6911
505/248-6915 (Fax)

Southwest Region (Arizona • New Mexico • Oklahoma • Texas) www.fws.gov/southwest/

For Release: September 10, 2013

Contacts: Tom Buckley. (505) 248-6455, Tom_Buckley@fws.gov

Service Protects the Jemez Mountain Salamander Under the Endangered Species Act

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) took action today to protect the Jemez Mountains salamander (*Plethodon neomexicanus*) as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (Act). The salamander is found in the Jemez Mountains in northern New Mexico in Los Alamos, Rio Arriba, and Sandoval Counties. This final rule becomes effective on October 10, 2013.

The final critical habitat designation will be announced in the near future.

The Service proposed listing the Jemez Mountains salamander, and to designate critical habitat, on September 20, 2012, and opened a 60 day public comment period. After reviewing the comments received, and using the best available science, the Service determined that the salamander does require the protection of the Act.

The Endangered Species Act makes it illegal to kill, harm or otherwise "take" a listed species, or to possess, import, export or engage in interstate or international commerce of a listed species without authorization in the form of a permit from the Service. The Act also requires all federal agencies to minimize the impact of their activities on listed species, and directs the Service to work with federal agencies and other partners to develop and carry out recovery efforts for those species. Listing also focuses attention on the needs of the species, encouraging conservation efforts by other agencies (federal, state and local), conservation groups and other organizations and individuals.

Habitat loss, degradation, and modification through the interrelated effects from severe wildland fire, historical and current fire management practices, forest composition and structure conversions, and climate change are the primary threats to this species.

The Jemez Mountains salamander is a strictly terrestrial species that does not utilize surface or standing water for any life function. This species of salamander does not possess lungs. Breathing occurs through its highly permeable skin, which must remain moist at all times to prevent desiccation and death. The salamander lives underground for most of the year, and emerges above ground when seasonal rains occur, generally July through September, but emergence is based on

microhabitat temperature and moisture. Salamanders forage, mate, and shelter while above ground.

Underground habitat supports sheltering for the salamander when not aboveground, and it is believed that the species lays its eggs underground. Underground habitat is in forest or meadow areas containing spaces provided by rocks with fractures or loose rocky soils; rotted tree root channels; or burrows of rodents or large invertebrates.

The health of threatened and endangered species is strongly linked to our own well-being. Millions of Americans depend on habitat that sustains these species – for clean air and water, recreational opportunities and for their livelihoods. By taking action to protect imperiled wildlife, we can ensure a healthy future for our community.

This final rule is available on the Internet at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/NewMexico/index.cfm>, and <http://www.regulations.gov> at Docket No. FWS–R2–ES–2012–0063, and at the New Mexico Ecological Services Field Office, 2105 Osuna NE, Albuquerque, NM 87113; by telephone 505–346–2525.

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. Connect with our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/usfws, follow our tweets at www.twitter.com/usfwshq, watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwshq>.

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