



News Release

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SERVICE INITIATES STATUS REVIEW FOR FOUR SPECIES IN AZ, NM, TX, AND OK

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) announces it is initiating status reviews for the Arizona toad, Cascade Caverns salamander, Rio Grande cooter (a turtle) and Alligator snapping turtle in response to a July 2012 petition from the Center for Biological Diversity. Today's decision is commonly referred to as a 90-day finding.

In the case of the Arizona toad, Cascade Caverns salamander, Rio Grande cooter and Alligator snapping turtle the Service has determined the petition presented substantial scientific or commercial information indicating that these species may warrant protection under the Endangered Species Act. The announcement begins a 60-day information collection period which closes on August 31, 2015.

The findings do not mean that the Service has decided to grant federal protections to these species. Rather, the findings trigger a more thorough review of all the biological information available for the species. To ensure the status reviews are comprehensive, the Service is looking for information from the public. The Service is seeking information about the species' biology, range, and population trends, including habitat requirements; genetics and taxonomy; historical and current range including distribution patterns; historical and current population levels; current and projected trends; and past and ongoing conservation measures for the species, its habitat, or both.

Information on the distribution of the four Southwest species undergoing a status review is below:

- Alligator snapping turtle – 15 states, including Texas and Oklahoma - FWS–R4–ES–2015–0038
- Arizona toad – Arizona, California, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah - FWS–R2–ES–2015–0040
- Cascade Caverns salamander – Texas - FWS–R2–ES–2015–0045
- Rio Grande cooter – New Mexico, Texas and Mexico - FWS–R2–ES–2015–0061

For more information on today's 90-day finding, what to comment on, or how to submit comments, see the *Federal Register* notice on our web site at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/>.

For more information on the 90-day finding process, visit <http://www.fws.gov/endangered/what-we-do/listing-petition-process.html>

To learn more about the Endangered Species program, go to <http://www.fws.gov/endangered/>.

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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