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Louisiana pinesnake photo available at <https://www.fws.gov/southeast/news/2017/10/us-fish-and-wildlife-service-extends-deadline-on-louisiana-pinesnake-ruling/>

Photo credit: Michael Sealy, USFWS

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service extends deadline on Louisiana pinesnake ruling

One of the rarest snakes in North America, the Louisiana pinesnake, is found only in isolated, mostly longleaf pine forests in Louisiana and Texas.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) announced today it will extend by six months the deadline for a final decision about the snake's status under the Endangered Species Act, to provide more time to resolve questions about survey data and scientific uncertainty that arose during the initial comment period. At the same time, it also is reopening the comment period on the proposal for 30 days and will accept comments postmarked or date stamped on or before November 6, 2017.

In 2016, the Service proposed listing the large, non-venomous snake as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act, and has been reviewing scientific data since then in order to make a final determination.

During the public comment period, the Service received comments on the proposed listing and the data used to support it. The comments reflected significant differences regarding the interpretation of the data used to determine the Louisiana pinesnake's status and trends.

Public comments previously submitted need not be resubmitted as they are already part of the public record and will be considered in the final rule. The Service will submit a final listing determination to the *Federal Register* on or before April 6, 2018.

The public may submit comments by one of the following methods:

(1) Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>. In the Search box, enter the docket number for this proposed rule, which is R4-ES-2016-0121; 4500030113. Then click on the Search button. You may submit a comment by clicking on "Comment Now!" Please ensure that you have found the correct rulemaking before submitting your comment.

(2) U.S. mail or hand delivery: Public Comments Processing, Attn: Docket No. FWS-R4-ES-2016-0121; 4500030113, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, MS: BPHC; 5275 Leesburg Pike; Falls Church, VA 22041-3803.

For further information, contact Joseph Ranson, Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Louisiana Ecological Services Office, 646 Cajundome Blvd., Suite 400, Lafayette, LA; telephone 337-291-3101; facsimile 337-291-3139. Persons who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 800-877-8339.