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Service Reopens Comment Period on Listing Proposal for Georgetown and Salado Salamanders

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced today the reopening of the comment period on the August 22, 2012, listing proposal for the Georgetown salamander and the Salado salamander. The Service is reopening the comment in order to consider the City of Georgetown's final ordinances for water quality and urban development. The ordinances were passed by the Georgetown City Council on December 20, 2013. The public comment period will be reopened for 15 days.

On August 20, 2013, the Service announced that we were extending the final listing and critical habitat determinations for the Georgetown and Salado salamanders for six months in light of concerns related to the sufficiency and accuracy of the available data for the two species. Since that time, the City of Georgetown prepared and enacted ordinances directed at alleviating threats to the Georgetown salamander from urban development. The Service would like to consider the ordinances as part of our final listing determination. Therefore we are reopening the comment period to allow the public the opportunity to provide comments on the likelihood of the implementation and the effectiveness of the ordinances.

The Georgetown and Salado salamanders are entirely aquatic and dependent upon water from the Edwards Aquifer for their survival, growth, and reproduction. The two salamanders reside in habitat dependent on the northern segment of the Edwards Aquifer, including springs and spaces in the subsurface aquifer.

The most significant threat to the salamanders is the degradation of habitat in the form of reduced water quality and quantity, and disturbance of spring sites. Water quality and quantity in the Edwards Aquifer is being negatively impacted by increasing urbanization and human population growth in areas that flow to where the salamanders are found. Recent drought conditions are also negatively impacting water resources.

During the reopened 15-day public comment period for the Georgetown and Salado salamanders, the Service is soliciting input from concerned governmental agencies, the scientific community, industry and other interested parties. Written comments must be received by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on January 22, 2014. For further information on how and where to submit comments and to review and/or download these documents visit the Service's Southwest Region's website at

www.fws.gov/southwest. The Service will make a final listing determination for the Georgetown and Salado salamanders no later than February 22, 2014.

The Service is actively engaged with conservation partners and the public in the search for improved and innovative ways to conserve and recover imperiled species. To learn more about the Endangered Species program, go to <http://www.fws.gov/angered/>.

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/usfws, watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfws>.

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