



Concho water snake Draft Post-Delisting Monitoring Plan

Southwest Region (Arizona • New Mexico • Oklahoma • Texas) <http://southwest.fws.gov>

The following are some of the most frequently asked questions about the Concho water snake.

Q. What action is the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) taking?

A. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) published a Notice of Availability in the Federal Register today announcing the Post-Delisting Monitoring Plan (PDMP) for the Concho water snake (*Nerodia paucimaculata*), and opening a 30 day public comment period which ends on October 23, 2009.

Q. Why is the Fish and Wildlife Service taking this action now?

A. The Federal Endangered Species Act requires the Service to implement a system, in cooperation with the States, to effectively monitor the status of each species that is removed from the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants due to recovery. The monitoring must occur for at least 5 years. The purpose of post-delisting monitoring (PDM) is to verify that a species we delist due to recovery remains secure from risk of extinction after we remove the protections of the Act.

Q. What is a post-delisting monitoring plan?

A. The draft post-delisting monitoring (PDM) plan describes how the Service proposes to monitor the status of the snake and its habitat, in cooperation with the State of Texas and other conservation partners, for a 15-year period if it is removed from the Federal list of endangered and threatened wildlife under another pending action. The draft PDM plan also provides a strategy for identifying and responding to any future population declines or habitat alterations.

Q. Has the Concho water snake been removed from the list of Threatened and Endangered species?

A. No, the listed population of the Concho water snake remains on the list of threatened and endangered species. On July 8, 2008, the Service published a proposed rule to remove the Concho water snake from the list of threatened species. This proposed rule was based on the best available scientific and commercial data, including new information, indicating that the Concho water snake has recovered because threats have been eliminated or reduced to the point that the species no longer meets the definition of threatened or endangered under the Act. The Service is in the process of making a final determination on whether or not to delist the Concho water snake.

Q. What is the Concho water snake?

A. The Concho Water Snake is a small snake compared to most other water snakes, with adults rarely exceeding 3 feet in total length. This nonvenomous snake has four rows of alternating dark brown spots or blotches on its back, two rows on each side. The coloration on its back is similar to a checkerboard of dark brown spots on a gray, brown, or reddish-brown color. The Concho Water Snake has a light pinkish or orange belly that is unmarked or has somewhat indistinct spots along the sides.

Q. Where is the Concho water snake found?

A. The Concho water snake is now found only in the Colorado and Concho Rivers in central Texas. It occurs on the Colorado River from E.V. Spence Reservoir to Colorado Bend State Park, including Ballinger Municipal Lake and O.H. Ivie Reservoir, and on the Concho River from the City of San Angelo to its confluence with the Colorado River at O.H. Ivie Reservoir. The Concho water snake can be found in rivers and streams, and on artificial shoreline habitat of the three reservoirs. Counties of known occurrence include Brown, Coke, Coleman, Concho, Lampasas, McCulloch, Mills, Runnels, San Saba, and Tom Green.

Q. What are you going to do to ensure the continued survival of the Concho water snake if it is delisted?

A. The Service drafted a monitoring plan for the Concho water snake in cooperation with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the Colorado River Municipal Water District. Over a 15-year period, surveys will be conducted to measure the presence and abundance of snakes 2 times a year at 18 sample sites across the range of the snake. Biological monitoring frequency will occur in three phases, decreasing over time, resulting in 7 years of surveys over the 15-year PDM period. Evaluation of stream conditions will consist of analysis of hydrologic data collected at eight existing stream gages from across the snake's range. The PDM plan describes specific monitoring triggers where certain outcomes of monitoring will result in specific actions. For example, if snakes are not captured from at least 75 percent of sample sites in any year, sampling effort will be intensified the following year beyond the minimum called for in the PDM plan. The monitoring triggers (both quantitative and qualitative) are based on the snake's distribution, presence, reproduction, and abundance, as well as evaluation of instream flow conditions.

The draft PDM plan includes annual reporting requirements. If PDM results in concern regarding the status of the snake or increasing threats, possible responses may include an extended or intensified monitoring effort, additional research (such as modeling metapopulation dynamics or assessing the status of the fish prey base), enhancement of riverine or shoreline habitats, or an increased effort to improve habitat connectivity by additional translocation of snakes between reaches. If future information collected from the PDM, or any other reliable source, indicates an increased likelihood that the species may become in danger of extinction, the Service will initiate a status review of the Concho water snake and determine if relisting the species is warranted.

Q. How can I help protect the Concho water snake?

A. The Service intends for the final PDM plan to be as accurate and as effective as possible. Therefore, comments or suggestions are being requested on the Concho water snake draft PDM plan from the public, concerned governmental agencies, the scientific community, industry, or any other interested party. We will take into consideration substantive comments we receive by the comment due date. These comments, and any additional information that is received, may lead to the adoption of a final PDM plan that differs from this draft PDM plan.

Q. How can I comment?

A. The draft PDM plan is available for review on the Internet at <http://endangered.fws.gov> and <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/AustinTexas/>. To request a copy of the draft PDM plan, write to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Austin Ecological Services Field Office, 10711 Burnet Road, Suite 200, Austin, TX 78758; telephone 512-490-0057; facsimile 512-490-0974. Supporting documentation used in preparing the draft PDM plan is available for public inspection, by appointment, during normal business hours, at the above office. You may submit comments by mail to the above office address.

More questions?

Write or call:
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