



News Release

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

For Release: October 23, 2013

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SERVICE REVISES CRITICAL HABITAT FOR THREE ENDANGERED COMAL INVERTEBRATES

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced today the final revised critical habitat for the Comal Springs dryopid beetle, Comal Springs riffle beetle and Peck's cave amphipod (three Comal species) under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). In total, approximately 169 acres in four units are being designated in Comal and Hays Counties, Texas.

The three Comal species were listed as endangered under the ESA on December 18, 1997, and on July 17, 2007, the Service designated 108.3 acres of critical habitat. The current revision differs from the 2007 final critical habitat designation in that the amount of critical habitat now being designated has increased as the result of the inclusion of underground or subsurface areas inside or adjacent to areas inhabited by the Comal Springs dryopid beetle and the Peck's cave amphipod. The revision also incorporates an additional 50 feet from the shoreline for the Comal Springs riffle beetle.

All three Comal species are freshwater invertebrates found in spring systems – Comal, San Marcos, Hueco and Fern Bank – associated with the Edwards Aquifer, one of the most prolific artesian aquifers in the world. The Trinity Aquifer may also provide some water to these spring systems, especially at Fern Bank Springs. The Comal Springs dryopid beetle is found in both Hays and Comal Counties. The Comal Springs riffle beetle and the Peck's cave amphipod are only found in Comal County.

The final rule will be effective November 22, 2013, 30 days after its publication in the *Federal Register*. Copies of the final rule may be downloaded from the Service's website at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/AustinTexas/>. Copies are also available at the Service's Austin Ecological Services Field Office, 10711 Burnet Road, Suite 200, Austin, TX 78758 or by calling 512-490-0057.

Designation of critical habitat does not affect land ownership, establish a refuge or preserve and has no impact on private landowners taking actions on their land that do not require federal funding or permits. Critical habitat is a term in the ESA that identifies geographic areas containing features essential for the conservation of a threatened or endangered species, and which may require special management considerations or protection.

Federal agencies that undertake, fund or permit activities that may affect critical habitat are required to consult with the Service to ensure such actions do not adversely modify or destroy designated critical habitat.

America's fish, wildlife and plant resources belong to all of us, and ensuring the health of imperiled species is a shared responsibility. 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/endangered/>.

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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