Conservation efforts pay off — relict leopard frog does not need ESA protection

LAS VEGAS — A small frog that was recently considered for listing under the Endangered Species Act is on its way to recovery. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) determined that relict leopard frog populations are stable or increasing and the species does not require federal protection.

The Service was petitioned in 2002 by the Center for Biological Diversity and the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance to list the relict leopard frog and designate critical habitat for the amphibian. The Service and a number of its partners were already involved in coordinated conservation efforts for the frog before the petition was filed. The results of the Relict Leopard Frog Conservation Team’s work include an overall reduction of most threats and an improvement in the species’ status.

“This is a conservation story that is heading toward a very happy ending,” said Susan Cooper, acting field supervisor in the Southern Nevada Fish and Wildlife Office. “Of course, we would not be in this position without the help of our many partners over the years.”

Besides representatives of the Service, the members of the Relict Leopard Frog Conservation Team have come from numerous agencies and organizations, including the Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, National Park Service, Nevada Department of Wildlife, Environmental Protection Agency, Arizona Game and Fish Department, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, Clark County (Nevada), the Southern Nevada Water Authority (including the Las Vegas Springs Preserve), the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and the University of Nevada, Reno.

The relict leopard frog is currently found in springs in southern Nevada and across the state line into Arizona. The frog historically occupied a variety of habitats including springs, streams, and wetlands characterized by clean, clear water with various depths, and cover such as submerged, emergent, and perimeter vegetation. Nonnative predators including Louisiana red swamp crayfish, American bullfrogs, and fish have reduced the relict leopard frog’s range.

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Populations of relict leopard frogs are improving due to conservation actions and current efforts to re-establish and increase naturally occurring and reintroduced populations. Ongoing habitat management, establishment of new sites, and restoration activities are making substantial progress, as the rangewide populations of the species are stable or growing.

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/cno. Connect with our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/usfwspacificsouthwest, follow our tweets at http://twitter.com/USFWS_PacSWest, watch our YouTube Channel at www.youtube.com/usfws and download photos from our Flickr page at www.flickr.com/photos/usfws_pacificsw/. 

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