

# Proposed Rule to List and Designate Critical Habitat for the Chiricahua Leopard Frog (*Lithobates chiricahuensis*)

## About the Document

**Title:** Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Listing and Designation of Critical Habitat for the Chiricahua Leopard Frog

**Purpose:** We propose to designate critical habitat for the Chiricahua leopard frog (*Lithobates chiricahuensis*) under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended. In total, we are proposing to designate approximately 11,136 acres (4,510 hectares) as critical habitat for the Chiricahua leopard frog. The proposed critical habitat is located in Apache, Cochise, Gila, Graham, Greenlee, Pima, Santa Cruz, and Yavapai Counties, Arizona; and Catron, Hidalgo, Grant, Sierra, and Socorro Counties, New Mexico. In addition, because of a taxonomic revision of the Chiricahua leopard frog, we are reassessing the status of and threats to the currently described species *Lithobates chiricahuensis* and proposing the listing as threatened of the currently described species.

## About the Peer Review Process

**Type of Review:** Influential

**Estimated Peer Review Timeline:** [DATE TO BE INSERTED FROM NOA PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD]

### **Peer review process:**

- We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, will solicit comments from three or more independent peer reviewers with expertise in leopard frog ecology. This scientific peer review will be held concurrently with the public review.
- Peer reviewers will not be asked to provide recommendations on the listing determination or designation of critical habitat. Peer reviewers may be asked to comment specifically on the quality of any information and analyses used or relied on in the document; identify oversights, omissions, and inconsistencies; provide advice on reasonableness of judgments made from the scientific evidence; ensure that scientific uncertainties are clearly identified and characterized, and that potential implications of uncertainties for the technical conclusions drawn are clear; and provide advice on the overall strengths and limitation of the scientific data used in the document.
- Peer reviewers will be selected based on the following criteria:
  - Expertise in leopard frog ecology.
  - Independence: Reviewers will not be employed by the Service. Academic and consulting scientists should have sufficient independence from the Service, if the government supports their work.

- Objectivity: Reviewers will be recognized by their peers as being objective, open-minded, and thoughtful. The reviewers should be comfortable sharing their knowledge and identifying their knowledge gaps.
  - Advocacy: Reviewers will not be known or recognized for an affiliation with an advocacy position regarding the protection of these species under the Endangered Species Act.
  - Conflict of Interest: Reviewers will not have any financial or other interest that conflicts or that could impair their objectivity.
- The Service will use the information received from the peer review in the final rule for listing and designating critical habitat for the Chiricahua leopard frog.
  - The estimated start date of the peer review will be [INSERT DATE OF NOA COMMENT PERIOD]

### **About public participation**

The proposed critical habitat will be made available to the public through news releases, direct mailings, and will be posted on Service websites with solicitations for public comment. The Service will implement an outreach plan to provide ample opportunity for public involvement in the review process. The Service will publish a final listing and designation of critical habitat following consideration of all comments received from the public and peer reviewers. This peer review plan is made available to allow the public to monitor our compliance with the Office of Management and Budget's Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review.

### **Contact**

For more information, contact Cat Crawford, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Arizona Ecological Services Field Office, at 520-670-6150 extension 232. Also see the Chiricahua leopard frog species' profile via the Service's Endangered Species website, at: [http://ecos.fws.gov/species\\_profile/servlet/gov.doi.species\\_profile.servlets.SpeciesProfile?spcode=D02F](http://ecos.fws.gov/species_profile/servlet/gov.doi.species_profile.servlets.SpeciesProfile?spcode=D02F). A copy of the final rule will be posted on this site upon completion.