Frequently Asked Questions
Proposal to list the Oregon spotted frog and designate critical habitat under the Endangered Species Act

1) What is the Oregon spotted frog?

The Oregon spotted frog is named for the black dots that cover its head, back, sides, and legs. It inhabits emergent wetland habitats and is almost entirely aquatic, rarely emerging onto land. It breeds February-early June, depending on elevation. Egg masses are laid in shallow (generally no more than 14 inches deep), often temporary, pools of water; gradually receding shorelines; on benches of seasonal lakes and marshes; and in wet meadows.

2) Why is it being proposed for listing under the ESA?

The species' historic range has been reduced by at least 76 percent and maybe as much as 90 percent. Habitat continues to be impacted and/or destroyed by human activities that result in the loss of wetlands, hydrologic changes, reduced water quality, and vegetation changes. These imminent threats place the frog at risk of becoming in danger of extinction in the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of their range.

3) What are the criteria for deciding whether to list a species?

A species is added to the list when it is determined to be endangered or threatened because of any of the following factors: the present or threatened destruction, modification, or curtailment of its habitat or range; overutilization for commercial, recreational, scientific, or educational purposes; disease or predation; the inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms; other natural or manmade factors affecting its survival.

4) What are the primary threats to the existence of Oregon spotted frogs?

The primary threats continue to be ongoing habitat destruction and modification, predation by nonnative species such as fish and bullfrogs, and small, isolated breeding locations that are not connected.

5) Where do the frogs live?

The Oregon spotted frog is found from extreme southwestern British Columbia south through the Puget Trough, and in the Cascades Range from south-central Washington at least to the Klamath Basin in southern Oregon. However, Oregon spotted frogs only occur in lower elevations in British Columbia and Washington and are restricted to high elevations in Oregon. In addition, Oregon spotted frogs currently have a very limited distribution west of the Cascade crest in Oregon, are considered to be extirpated from the Willamette Valley in Oregon, and may be extirpated in the Klamath and Pit River basins of California.

In Washington, they currently occur in Whatcom, Skagit, Thurston, Skamania and Klickitat counties.

In Oregon, the frogs currently occur in Jackson, Lane, Wasco, Deschutes, and Klamath counties.

6) What is the agency proposing to do now?

The USFWS is proposing to list the Oregon spotted frog as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. The agency is also proposing to designate critical habitat for the species. If we finalize these rules as proposed, it would extend the Act's protections to this species and its critical habitat.

7) What is critical habitat?

Critical habitat is a term in the ESA that identifies geographic areas containing physical or biological features essential to the conservation of a threatened or endangered species and which may require special management considerations or protection or specific areas outside the geographical area occupied by the species at the time it is listed that are essential for the conservation of the species.

8) **How does the Service determine what areas to propose for critical habitat?**

Biologists consider physical or biological habitat features needed for life and successful reproduction of the species. These include, but are not limited to: space for growth and normal behavior; food, water, air, light, minerals, or other nutritional or physiological requirements; cover or shelter; sites for breeding and rearing offspring; and habitats that are protected from disturbance or are representative of the historic geographical and ecological distributions of the species.

9) **How will the designation of critical habitat affect private landowners?**

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. If a landowner needs a federal permit or receives federal funding for a specific activity, the agency responsible for issuing the permit or providing the funds would consult with the Service to determine how the action may affect a listed species or its habitat.

10) **What is the USFWS doing to work with local interests to reduce impacts from the proposed listing?**

In both Oregon and Washington, we are working with federal, state and local governments and private landowners to develop and implement conservation actions and coordinate land-use guidelines to protect the species with minimal impacts to property uses and values.

The Service is also considering developing a special rule to exempt certain ongoing land and water management activities (e.g., grazing, mechanical vegetation management, water level manipulation) from take prohibitions of the Act if the Oregon spotted frog is listed, when those activities are conducted in a manner consistent with the conservation of the frog. We are soliciting information from the public to determine what activities may be appropriate for a proposed 4d special rule. We see meaningful opportunities to conserve the Oregon spotted frog by allowing and promoting ongoing, and possibly new, activities on non-Federal lands that contribute to the conservation of this now largely management-dependent species.

11) Why is it important to protect the Oregon spotted frog?

In their wetland habitats, Oregon spotted frogs are an integral part of the food web. Tadpoles can keep waterways clean by feeding on plant tissue, bacteria, algae, detritus, and carrion. Adults eat insects, including those that can transmit diseases to livestock. Adults are a food resource for apex predators such as Sandhill cranes, herons, snakes, and river otters.

Oregon spotted frogs have shown a possible resistance to the chytrid fungus (*Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis* (Bd)), otherwise known as the "frog plague." This fungus has been implicated in the decline and extinction of numerous amphibian species in multiple locations around the world. The Oregon spotted frog could assist in ongoing research to understand this fungus.