

Facts and Q&As - 12-month finding for a Petition to List the Siskiyou Mountains Salamander and Scott Bar Salamander

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Background on the species:

The Siskiyou Mountains salamander and Scott Bar salamander are completely terrestrial. They do not have lungs but rather breathe through their skin. They are slender-bodied, medium-sized salamanders, growing on average up to 4-6 inches. They are brownish in color with an indistinct lighter dorsal stripe and have short limbs.

Recent research has determined that the Siskiyou Mountains and Scott Bar salamanders are distinct species. A third genetic group, Siskiyou Mountains salamander Group II has been delineated within the California portion of this species complex. For clarity, we refer to the genetic groups as Applegate salamanders (north of Siskiyou Crest), Grider salamanders (south of Siskiyou Crest), and Scott Bar salamanders.

The Siskiyou Mountains salamander is endemic to three counties in southwestern Oregon and northern California, from the Applegate River drainage of the Rogue River to the Klamath River watershed. Scott Bar salamander is endemic to Siskiyou County, California, from east of the Seiad Valley to Scott Bar Mountain in the Klamath River watershed.

Both species are found in or near talus (loose surface rock) and fissured rock outcrops where moisture and humidity are high enough to allow respiration through their skin. Moist conditions may be provided by topographic features, forest cover, or a combination of the two. The salamanders are regularly found in a wide range of habitat conditions but appear to be more abundant in dense forest conditions. Recent studies indicate that intensive disturbances such as clearcuts may reduce populations, however, the species appear to persist and then recover as vegetation recovers. There is no evidence that less-intensive forest management practices have substantial effects on these salamanders. The species' ranges are primarily on Federal lands and receive substantial protection from provisions of the Northwest Forest Plan.

Roughly 440 Applegate salamander, 76 Grider salamander, and 115 Scott Bar salamander localities are currently known.

Q. Why did the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service evaluate these particular species with regard to the Endangered Species Act?

A. In 2004, the Service received a petition to list and designate critical habitat for the Siskiyou Mountains and Scott Bar salamanders. Since then the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has evaluated the issue multiple times. Today's announcement that these species do not warrant federal protection under the Endangered Species Act comes after a 12-

month review by the Service, which had been ordered by a U.S. District Court.

Q. Why don't these salamanders warrant Federal Protection under the Endangered Species Act?

A. We found no evidence that either species is threatened by habitat loss or other substantial threats in any portion of their ranges.

While the salamanders may be more abundant in dense forest conditions, they are also regularly found in a wide range of habitat conditions including managed forests. Forest management practices such as thinning and fuels reduction do not appear to substantially affect salamander populations. Salamander populations appear to recover as vegetation is re-established on more intensively disturbed sites.

During the last decade there has been a rapid increase in the number of known Siskiyou Mountains salamander and Scott Bar salamander populations, and large areas of suitable habitat have yet to be surveyed.

There were also additional factors that led to this decision, including:

- Federal lands managed under the provisions of the Northwest Forest Plan make up the vast majority of the species' ranges.
- The rate of timber harvest and the intensity of timber harvest practices have declined dramatically on Federal lands.
- Habitat loss has not been quantified nor demonstrated to have impacted the species.
- The Siskiyou Mountains salamander is currently protected as a threatened species under the California ESA, and is afforded protection on private timberlands. The Scott Bar salamander also receives protection on private lands in CA.
- A considerable amount of Scott Bar salamander habitat has yet to be surveyed, suggesting that the population may be larger than currently described.

Q. How did the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service determine these findings?

A. We conducted a thorough review of the published literature, agency reports, and research data. We were assisted by scientists from the US Geological Survey, who developed a peer-reviewed report summarizing the best scientific information available for the salamander species.

Q. Are there any protections for these salamander species outside of the federal Endangered Species Act?

A. Yes. The species' ranges are primarily on federal lands and receive substantial protection from provisions of the Northwest Forest Plan. In addition, these species are managed under the Special Status Species programs of the Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service, which contain provisions for development of Conservation Strategies to guide conservation of these species. The USFS Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest, Bureau of Land Management Medford District, and the Service implemented a Conservation Strategy to conserve the Applegate salamander in OR and a small portion of CA. And the Klamath National Forest, in conjunction with the Service, is developing a Conservation Strategy for the Grider salamander and Scott Bar salamander. In California, the Siskiyou Mountains salamander is currently listed under the California Endangered Species Act, but the State of California may delist the species because of evidence that it is more widespread than previously thought.

Q. What happens now with regard to these Salamanders and the federal Endangered Species Act?

A. At this point, the Service will take no further action. The Service will continue to monitor the status and management of the species and to accept additional information and comments from all concerned governmental agencies, the scientific community, industry, or any other interested party concerning this finding.

More questions? Write or call:

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