

# Endangered species protection sought for spring snails

By [Mary Manning](#)

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A scientific petition has been filed today with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today to protect 42 spring snail species from Nevada, Utah and California as endangered species.

The Center for Biological Diversity and the Freshwater Mollusk Conservation Society filed the petition under the Endangered Species Act.

"These 42 species of spring snails are severely threatened by groundwater withdrawal proposed by the Southern Nevada Water Authority and other users," said Tierra Curry, conservation biologist with the center and lead author of the petition.

"Unsustainable groundwater pumping threatens not just these snails but also hundreds of other desert species and water supplies for rural residents and future generations," Curry said.

Spring snails are dependent on consistent groundwater flow, the petition says, adding that reducing the flow will have an immediate effect on their populations and spring snails are a good indicator when water tables decline.

The spring snails are found primarily in Clark, Lincoln, Nye and White Pine counties in Nevada and Beaver and Millard counties in Utah.

Fourteen of the species occur at only a single spring and a total of 39, including those 14, occur at 10 or fewer locations. None of the snails are currently protected on state, federal or private lands.

The Southern Nevada Water Authority's plan to build a multi-billion dollar pipeline from northeastern Nevada to Southern Nevada to enhance water supplies in the Las Vegas area could affect the springs the snails inhabit, the petition says.

The water authority is prepared to mitigate any effects from pumping groundwater from White Pine or other counties, said water authority spokesman J.C. Davis. "We are prepared to meet all environmental laws," Davis said, if the snails receive special status.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has 90 days to determine whether the center's petition presents substantial scientific information to warrant Endangered Species Act protection for the spring snails and one year to determine if the species warrant protection as endangered

species.

"Without protection under the Endangered Species Act, these spring snails will be lost forever," said Rob Mrowka, a conservation advocate with the center. "Groundwater withdrawal, spring diversion, livestock grazing and an array of other threats severely threaten these 42 spring snail species along with the other species that depend on desert springs."

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