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Protection sought for dozens of snail species

SPECIAL TO THE PVT

LAS VEGAS -- How many species of rare snails would you imagine live in Nye County?

Noe, not even close. Try again.

The answer is bunches, and the Center for Biological Diversity and the Freshwater Mollusk Conservation Society has filed a scientific petition with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to protect 42 spring snail species from Nevada, Utah, and California as endangered species 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."

Because spring snails are dependent on consistent groundwater flow, reductions in flow will have an immediate impact on their populations.

As such, spring snails are an excellent indicator of declining water tables. 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 location, and 39 occur at 10 or fewer locations. None is protected on state, federal, or private lands.

"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."

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has 90 days to determine whether the 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.

In Nye County, 10 of the springsnails occur in the Upper Amargosa watershed: the Amargosa Tryonia (*Tryonia variegata*), the Minute Tryonia (*T. ericae*), the Point of Rocks Tryonia (*T. elata*), the Sportinggoods Tryonia (*T. angulata*), the Ash Meadows Pebblesnail (*Pyrgulopsis erythropoma*), the

Crystal Springsnail (*P. crystalis*), the Distal Gland Springsnail (*P. nanus*), the Elongate Gland Springsnail (*P. isolatus*), the Fairbanks Springsnail (*P. fairbanksensis*) and the Median Gland Nevada Pyrg (*P. pisteri*).

Seven of the species occur in Nye County in the White River watershed: the Butterfield Pyrg (*Pyrgulopsis*), the Emigrant Pyrg (*P. gracilis*), the Hardy Pyrg (*P. marcida*), the Hubbs Pyrg (*P.*

hubbsi), the Pahrnagat Pebblesnail (*P. merriami*), the White River Valley Pyrg (*P. sathos*) and the Grated Tryonia (*T. clathrata*). The Hubbs Pyrg also occurs in the Pahrnagat Valley

in Nye County.

Five of the species occur in Duckwater Valley (Railroad Valley watershed) in Nye County: the Big Warm Spring Pyrg (*Pyrgulopsis papillata*), Duckwater Pyrg (*P. aloba*), Duckwater Warm Springs Pyrg (*P. villacampae*), Lockes Pyrg (*Pyrgulopsis lockensis*) and the Southern Duckwater Pyrg (*P. anatina*).

The Sterile Basin Pyrg (*P. sterilis*) occurs in Nye County in the Ralston-Stone Cabin Valley watershed.

The Spring Mountains Pyrg (*P. deaconi*) occurs in Nye County in the Pahrump Valley."

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