

# Group seeks endangered status for frog

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The California Department of Fish and Game is considering adding two frog species to California's endangered species list following a petition by a conservation group last year.

The Center for Biological Diversity petitioned the state to list the Sierra Nevada yellow-legged and the southern mountain yellow-legged frog in January 2010. Together, the species are known as the mountain yellow-legged frog.

Fish and Game is currently accepting public comments on the proposal.

The Center for Biological Diversity contends the increased protection afforded by an endangered species designation is the only way for the species to recover. Mountain-yellow-legged frog populations have decreased by up to 95 percent since 1995.

The decline has been linked to stocked trout feeding on the frogs, as well as the Chytrid fungus, which has ravaged amphibian populations worldwide.

"Once the most abundant frog in the high Sierra, the mountain yellow-legged frog now barely clings to survival," said Jeff Miller, a conservation advocate with the Center for Biological Diversity, in a statement. "The mountain yellow-legged frog needs the protections of the California Endangered Species Act to have any chance at recovery."



The petition recommends a series of actions to protect the frogs, including the stoppage of all trout stocking in lakes with mountain yellow-legged frogs and the removal of trout from some lakes.

If the frog is listed as an endangered species, the effect to fisherman should not be as dramatic as some anglers suspect, said researcher Roland Knapp during a Tuesday phone interview.

During the past decade, the Department of Fish and Game has modified stocking programs in consideration of mountain yellow-legged frog populations, Knapp said.

Listing the species as endangered is likely to lead to additional proposals to remove stocked fish from naturally fishless backcountry lakes, but won't effect the most popular, drive-up spots for fishermen, Knapp said.

With thousands of alpine lakes throughout the Sierra Nevada, finding a solution

that supports both healthy fish and frog populations is possible, Knapp added.

Public comments on the proposal to list the species should include "relevant scientific data or comments about mountain yellow-legged frogs' taxonomic status, ecology, biology, life history, management recommendations, distribution, abundance, threats and essential habitat, or other factors related to the status of the species," according to a statement from Fish and Game.

All comments or other information must be submitted in writing by 5 p.m. March 18. Comments can be emailed to MYLF@dfg.ca.gov or mailed to: Fisheries Branch – High Mountain Lakes Program, Department of Fish and Game, Attn: Mitch Lockhart, 830 S Street, Sacramento, CA 95811.

Comments will be included in the status evaluation report being prepared for the Fish and Game Commission.

The report will address existing threats to mountain yellow-legged frogs and the effectiveness of the current regulations regarding the species.

The report is expected for completion at or before the September 2011 Fish and Game Commission meeting.

The public will also have a 30 day comment period after the report is complete.