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Frog found in Ariz., NM gets habitat

By FELICIA FONSECA Associated PressAssociated Press

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz.—The federal government is designating more than 10,000 acres of critical habitat for a rare spotted frog found in Arizona and New Mexico.

The acreage in west-central and southwestern New Mexico, and central and southeastern Arizona have water sources that the Chiricahua leopard frog needs to rebound.

The aquatic-breeding amphibians once found at hundreds of moist sites across the Southwest now exist in less than 20 percent of their historic range.

The frog was listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act in 2002, but no critical habitat was proposed.

An environmental group sued and reached a settlement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 2009 to consider whether critical habitat would help the frog.

The agency announced a final ruling Monday in compliance with a court order.