



Groups plan lawsuit to force FWS decision on Rocky Mt. toads

Laura Petersen, E&E reporter
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Environmental groups are threatening to sue the Fish and Wildlife Service for missing the deadline to decide whether a boreal toad population should be added to the endangered species list.

The Center for Biological Diversity, Rocky Mountain Wild and the Biodiversity Conservation Alliance petitioned the government in 2011 to protect the boreal toad population in the southern Rocky Mountains, Utah, Idaho and Nevada, which they say are in danger of extinction from habitat destruction and a deadly fungus.

FWS agreed to conduct a full review of the population's status but failed to do so within a year of receiving the petition. The groups are ready to file suit unless a decision or a timeline for completing the process is presented within 60 days.

The boreal toads were identified as a candidate species worthy of listing in 1995 but were removed a decade later on the grounds that they were not genetically different from other toad populations.



Environmental groups argue boreal toads in Colorado, Utah, Idaho and Nevada are a genetically unique group in danger of extinction from a deadly fungus and habitat destruction. Photo by Bill Battaglin, courtesy of the U.S. Geological Survey.

New evidence shows they are unique, the petitioners said, and cannot afford any more delays.

“The boreal toad is the region’s only alpine, forest-dwelling toad,” said conservation biologist Megan Mueller of Rocky Mountain Wild. “This unique toad is an indicator of the environmental health of our mountain streams and wetlands.”