



Amphibians Get Life-Saving Protections under the Endangered Species Act

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Almost four years have passed since the Center for Biological Diversity struck a historic legal settlement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, requiring the agency to make initial or final decisions on whether to add hundreds of imperiled plants and animals to the endangered species list by 2017. The settlement caps a decade-long effort by the Center's scientists, attorneys and activists to secure federal help for some of the country's least protected, but most imperiled, species. Under that settlement, dozens of amphibians across the United States are now on track to receive life-saving protections under the Endangered Species Act.

The purpose of the Endangered Species Act is to prevent the extinction of the most at-risk plants and animals, increase their numbers, spur their full recovery and, eventually, their removal from the endangered list. Two elements give the Act its "teeth": the citizen-suit provision allows public-interest groups and individuals to petition and sue the government to make sure the Act protects species as it was intended to, while the "critical habitat" provision provides a crucial tool for protecting the lands and waters that species need to survive and recover.

Several Amphibians Receive Federal Protection in 2014

The Center's landmark agreement has already yielded important results by securing proposed and finalized listing and critical habitat protections for numerous amphibians in the United States. Here are the amphibians that received protections in 2014:

Oregon spotted frog listed as threatened with proposed critical habitat covering more than 68,000 acres and 24 stream miles. Once abundant from British Columbia to California, spotted frogs have disappeared from 90 percent of their former range, mostly because their wetland habitats are being destroyed.

Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog and **mountain yellow-legged frog** (Northern Population) listed as endangered with 1,105,400 acres of critical habitat proposed for the Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog and 221,498 acres for the northern population of the mountain yellow-legged frog. Yellow-legged frogs throughout the Sierra Nevada have suffered dramatic declines in range and numbers due to habitat destruction and degradation, disease, predation by nonnative trout, pesticides and climate change.

Yosemite toad listed as threatened with 750,926 acres proposed as critical habitat. Yosemite toads have disappeared from many areas and suffered population losses, including in Yosemite National Park, where these toads were first discovered and given their name. Yosemite toads are threatened primarily by livestock grazing, climate change and pesticides.

Georgetown salamander and Salado salamander listed as threatened with 1,031 acres proposed as critical habitat for the Georgetown salamander. These fully aquatic animals require clean, well-oxygenated water and are threatened by activities that disturb their surface springs, pollute their water or reduce its flow to their underground aquatic habitats. The Salado salamander is extremely rare and has been observed just a few times over the past several decades, despite intensive survey efforts. The Service determined in 2001 that the Georgetown salamander deserves federal protection; the Georgetown salamander waited more than a decade for the Service to finalize the listing.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Underfunded for Listing and Recovery Efforts

All in all, in the past four years, more than 140 species have been added to the endangered species list, but hundreds are still waiting for protection. And recovery dollars are now spread ever thinner on a per-species basis. Yet the Obama administration's proposed budget for 2016 includes only slight increases in overall funding for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the agency whose mission it is to stave off the wildlife extinction crisis in the United States. When adjusted for inflation, the proposed budget is essentially flat, and actually provides fewer dollars on a per-species basis

than was budgeted at the start of the Obama administration. The agency's proposed budget for endangered species is less than the government spends on a single F-35c fighter jet.

Approximately \$23 million was requested to list and protect highly imperiled species under the Endangered Species Act — a small increase from last year, but roughly the same amount of funding received in 2010, even though hundreds of species are waiting for decisions about their protection.

Recovery efforts are funded separately from listing, but as with listing, the Administration has requested far less than is needed. Indeed, most of the more than 1,500 species protected under the Endangered Species Act receive far from adequate funding for recovery. The most recent expenditure report produced by the Fish and Wildlife Service covering 2013 shows that nearly 60 percent received less than \$50,000, and about 21 percent received less than \$10,000 — including 48 species that received \$1,000 or less. Yet the Obama administration is only asking for a marginal increase. Progress toward recovery is directly correlated with the availability of federal resources and dollars for recovery, and perpetually inadequate funding is limiting species recovery.

The endangered coqui llanero, for example, received zero funding in 2013. This tiny, gorgeous frog was listed in 2012 and faces extinction because its entire population lives in just one wetland system, under dire threat from urban development and water contamination from nearby landfills.

Scientists estimate that approximately one-third of amphibians in the U.S. are at risk of extinction. Surprisingly, though, just 32 of the approximately 1,500 species protected under

the U.S. Endangered Species Act are amphibians. Because the Endangered Species Act is America's strongest environmental law and surest way to save species threatened with extinction, the Center works to gain these needed protections through scientific petitions, advocacy and law-suits. The Center is also working to ensure that Congress designates the funding for endangered species recovery that the Fish and Wildlife Service desperately needs to accomplish its goals.