

Mount Shasta Herald

Conservation groups file intent to sue to protect local salamander

By Danielle Jester
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The Siskiyou Mountains salamander – a rare species that lives only in the Klamath-Siskiyou region on the border of California and Oregon – is the subject of a potential lawsuit against the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Four conservation groups on Monday filed an intent to sue the USFWS for failing to respond to a 2018 petition for Endangered Species Act protection for the Siskiyou Mountains salamander.

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In response, the Center for Biological Diversity and associated groups then filed a petition to protect the salamander under the Endangered Species Act. In response, federal agencies signed a conservation agreement in 2007 to protect habitat for 110 high-priority salamander sites on federal lands in the Applegate River watershed in southern Oregon.

The CBD alleges, “In 2008 the Fish and Wildlife Service denied protection for the salamander based on this conservation agreement and old-growth forest protections provided by the Northwest Forest Plan.”

The CBD contends that the Western Oregon Plan Revision that was adopted by the Bureau of Land Management in 2016 “undermines key elements of the 2007 conservation strategy that were deemed necessary in order to maintain well-distributed salamander populations and avoid a trend towards listing under the Endangered Species Act.”

The conservation groups petitioned to list the Siskiyou Mountains Salamander under the ESA in March of 2018, which gave the USFWS 90 days to respond. As the USFWS did not respond in the allotted time frame, the conservation groups claim it is in violation of Section 4 of the ESA.

According to the letter from the conservation groups, if the USFWS does not respond within 60 days to the notice of intent that was filed by the conservation groups on Monday, “the conservation groups will pursue litigation against the agency.”

When contacted for a response regarding the conservation groups’ notice of intent to sue, the USFWS stated, “The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service cannot discuss pending or ongoing litigation.”