



April 23, 2018

Sent via Email and U.S. Mail

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Re: New Study Splits Shasta Salamanders Into Three Species (Docket No. FWS-R8-ES-2015-0115)

On behalf of the Center for Biological Diversity, I am writing to inform the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (“Service”) of a study published earlier this month that splits the Shasta salamander into three species:

Bingham, R.E., Papenfuss, T.J., Linstrand III, L. and D.B. Wake. 2018. Phylogeography and Species Boundaries In the *Hydromantes shastae* Complex, With Description of Two New Species (Amphibia; Caudata; Plethodontidae). Bull. Mus. Comp. Zool., 161(10): 403-427.

Using multiple analytical methods and datasets, the researchers revised the taxonomy of the Shasta salamander, resulting in the Shasta salamander (*Hydromantes shastae*) being rediagnosed and restricted to the eastern portion of its former range, as well as the identification

of two new allopatric species. The paper formally describes two new species, the Samwel Shasta salamander (*Hydromantes samweli*) and the Wintu Shasta salamander (*Hydromantes wintu*). The Wintu Shasta salamander is restricted to a very narrow central portion of what was originally recognized as the already small range of the Shasta salamander. The Samwel Shasta salamander is restricted to the western and north-central portions of the originally recognized range of the Shasta salamander.

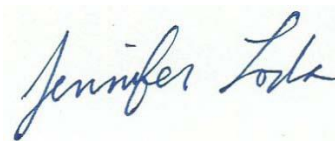
These three species are even more endangered than the previously recognized singular entity. As such, this new study reaffirms the need to provide Endangered Species Act protection for Shasta salamanders. The Service should consider protections for all three newly described species of Shasta salamander.

On July 11, 2012, the Center for Biological Diversity submitted a petition to list the Shasta salamander and 52 other amphibian and reptiles species. The petition asks the FWS to protect six turtles, seven snakes, two toads, four frogs, 10 lizards and 24 salamanders under the ESA. A copy of the petition, along with a list of the petitioned species, is available here: http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/campaigns/amphibian_conservation/pdfs/Mega_herp_petition_7-9-2012.pdf. Backed by hundreds of scientific articles, the 450-page petition details the status of, and threats to, the petitioned animals, demonstrating the urgent need for their federal protection.

On September 18, 2015 the Service published a positive 90-day finding for the Shasta salamander in the Federal Register, finding that the Shasta salamander may qualify for Endangered Species Act protection. According to the work plan developed by the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Shasta salamander is not due to receive a 12-month finding until 2022. Given this new information, I hope that the Service will reprioritize these species in its timeline for review of the Shasta salamanders.

Shasta salamanders and the other petitioned species are at risk and deserve a prompt status review by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Please add this new study – which is attached to this letter – to your file of best available science on Shasta salamanders. Feel free to contact us with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jennifer Loda". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jennifer Loda
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