

May 6, 2014
Regular Meeting
Dept. Reports
Community Develop.

Frog and Toad
Listing Emerging
Issue

Mono County Community Development Department

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May 6, 2014

TO: The Honorable Mono County Board of Supervisors

FROM: Wendy Sugimura, Community Development Analyst
Dr. Jim Paulus, Ph.D.
Scott Burns, Director

RE: FROG AND TOAD LISTING EMERGING ISSUE

On April 29th, the US Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) published the final rule listing the Sierra Nevada Yellow-Legged Frog as endangered and the Yosemite Toad as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. These listings are based upon the undeniably rapid loss of populations across their historical range, and upon identified threats to the remaining populations. The listing rule describes in detail the species' loss of range and currently known threats, but **does not designate critical habitat**. Critical habitat designations will be published in a separate rule within the next year.

Comments submitted by the County in response to the 2013 draft listing rule were intended to make the Service aware of the best available current science regarding the specific threats of recreation, pack stock use, and grazing to the amphibians. In apparent response, the 2014 final rule contains the following important changes:

- The adequacy of current stock pack and grazing allotment practices as managed in the Inyo and Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forests is now carefully distinguished from historic practices that damaged the habitat. The legacy effects of prior use on meadow hydrology are to be the primary targets for recovery, not the current use (although studies supporting this position are questioned for their ability to detect impacts to Yosemite toad). **It is now more likely that the upcoming recovery plans will not seek to close grazing allotments or otherwise change the status quo.**
- The effects of recreation are now more clearly and specifically defined, and **focus future recovery efforts on discouraging focused points of recreational use in meadows**. This would, for example, direct forest management to move small segments of trails and repair damaged meadow hydrology, rather than close occupied watersheds to all recreation.

Mono County should count these changes as successes, as far as the listing rule is concerned. The next significant decision for the amphibians will be the rule designating critical habitat, under which the _____

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County requested specific front country and highly utilized backcountry lakes and corridors be excluded.

Following the publication of the critical habitat designation rule, species' recovery plans will likely be developed. These plans identify the specific management actions necessary to recovery the species, criteria to be met for delisting, and implementation cost and time estimates. The process to develop these plans is not known at this time, but Mono County has requested a seat at the table.

For more information, please contact Wendy Sugimura at 760.924.1814 or wsugimura@mono.ca.gov.