



News Release

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Service Seeks Comments on Proposed Chiricahua Leopard Frog Critical Habitat -Review of Economic Effects Report Sought-

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is seeking comments on a draft economic analysis and draft environmental assessment of the proposed designation of critical habitat for the threatened Chiricahua leopard frog. The Service also announces a revision of the proposed critical habitat designation, including the addition of three habitat units in New Mexico and a clarification of the habitat attributes important for the frog, making them more objective and measurable. Comments on the proposed rule and supporting documents can be submitted through Oct. 21, 2011.

The Service [proposed](#) critical habitat for the Chiricahua leopard frog under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) on March 15, 2011. The Service also began reassessing the status of and threats to the Chiricahua leopard frog – particularly in light of the discovery that the Ramsey Canyon leopard frog population on the eastern slopes of the Huachuca Mountains is in fact a Chiricahua leopard frog population. The Service proposed to continue its protection of the Chiricahua leopard frog as threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

The draft economic analysis of the critical habitat proposal indicates that no significant economic impacts are likely to result from the designation of critical habitat. Incremental costs over the next 20 years are limited to \$1.3 to \$1.7 million in administrative efforts of new and reinitiated consultations with federal agencies. The economic analysis is intended to assist the Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior in determining whether the benefits of excluding particular areas from the designation outweigh the benefits of including those areas in the designation.

Today's announcement includes the addition of areas in Kerr Canyon, West Fork Gila River, and Palomas Creek in New Mexico – each occupied when the frog was added to the list of threatened species in 2002 and known to be presently or recently occupied by the frog. This addition of 331 acres brings the total critical habitat proposal to 11,467 acres in central and southeastern Arizona, and west-central and southwestern New Mexico.

Critical habitat is a term in the ESA that identifies geographic areas containing features essential for the conservation of a threatened or endangered species, and which may require special management considerations or protection. Critical habitat designation provides for the conservation of threatened and endangered species in several ways. Specifying the location of habitat essential for the conservation of the species helps federal agencies identify where to utilize their authorities to benefit the species as required by the ESA. Designating critical habitat also helps focus the conservation

efforts of other conservation partners, such as State and local governments, non-governmental organizations, and individuals. An extensive group of conservation partners completed and began implementing a [recovery plan](#) for the Chiricahua leopard frog in 2007.

Designation of critical habitat does not affect land ownership or establish a refuge or preserve. In general, a critical habitat designation has no impact on private landowners taking actions on their land that do not require federal funding or permits.

The health of threatened and endangered species, especially amphibians, is strongly linked to our own well-being. Millions of Americans depend on habitat that sustains these species – for clean air and water, recreational opportunities and for their livelihoods. By taking action to protect imperiled native fish, wildlife and plants, we can ensure a healthy future for our community.

The Chiricahua leopard frog is a medium-to-large sized frog with a stocky body that can grow up to 4.3 inches long. The frog is often green and has a leopard-like patterning, small pale raised spots on the rear thighs, and a raised fold of skin running down each side of the back.

Comments on the proposed critical habitat, the draft economic analysis, the draft environmental assessment, and the proposed retention of the frog's threatened status should be submitted by Oct. 21, 2011. These documents and other information about the Chiricahua leopard frog are available on the Internet at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/>, or by contacting the Service's Arizona Ecological Service Office at (602) 242-0210. Comments can be submitted electronically via the Federal eRulemaking Portal at: <http://www.regulations.gov>, or can be mailed or hand delivered to Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS-R2-ES-2010-0085; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 222; Arlington, VA 22203.

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Note to editors: Photographs and maps are available by contacting Jeff Humphrey at 602-242-0210 x222 (jeff_humphrey@fws.gov) or visiting <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/Amphibians.htm> and <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/CLF.htm>.