

From: [Snyder-Velto, Della](#)
Subject: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Proposes to Reclassify Arroyo Toad from Endangered to Threatened
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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Department of the Interior

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office

2493 Portola Road, Ste. B

Ventura, CA 93003

Phone: 805/644-1766

Fax: 805/644-3958

Website: <http://www.fws.gov/ventura>

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Contact: Roger Root, Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office, 805-644-1766

roger_root@fws.gov

Service Proposes to Reclassify Arroyo Toad from Endangered to Threatened under the Endangered Species Act *Conservation Efforts Have Improved Habitat, Reduced Threats*

Ventura, CA - The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today proposed to reclassify the arroyo toad from endangered to threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) after determining that the amphibian has expanded its current range in the past 20 years and that conservation efforts have reduced the threats to its survival.

"Working in partnership with the military, other federal agencies, local governments and private landowners, we have significantly reduced the threats to the arroyo toad posed by habitat loss, and degradation and predation by bullfrogs and other non-native species that led to the species being listed as endangered in 1993," said Service Director Dan Ashe. "This demonstrates once again how the Endangered Species Act can work to pull plants and animals back from the brink of extinction."

A species is listed under the ESA as endangered when it is at risk of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range. A threatened designation means it is likely to become an

endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range. In either case, the Act prohibits the species from being killed, harmed or harassed and provides protections for its habitat.

The small, stocky arroyo toad inhabits coastal and desert streams and rivers in central and southern California, from Monterey County southward into northern Baja California, Mexico. They use streams that have slow-moving currents with shallow pools, nearby sandbars and adjacent stream terraces for breeding. Habitat that supports breeding populations of the species is maintained by periodic flooding that scours out vegetation and replenishes fine sediments.

The species was negatively affected by extensive habitat loss from about 1920 to 1980 resulting from construction and operation of dams and reservoirs, roads, agricultural and urban development, and recreational development such as campgrounds. Other threats to the species included mining and prospecting, livestock grazing, and alteration of natural fire regimes.

At the time the species was listed, its range-wide population was estimated to have declined by 76 percent, with 22 river basins in the U.S. supporting varying numbers of toads. Current information indicates the species is present in 25 river basins in the U.S., and an additional 10 basins in Mexico. Each river basin contains numerous creeks and rivers supporting multiple populations of arroyo toads.

Although current threats to the arroyo toad remain similar to when the species was listed, ongoing conservation efforts are reducing some of the effects from these threats. Efforts are being made to remove nonnative plant species (tamarisk and giant reed) and introduced predators (bullfrogs, green sunfish, crayfish) from arroyo toad habitats.

Landscape-level conservation plans have been completed in portions of the species' range resulting in the protection of some rivers and creeks occupied by toads. Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton and Fort Hunter Liggett have completed Integrated Natural Resource Management Plans that provide conservation benefits to the species. Additionally, all four national forests in southern California - Angeles, Cleveland, San Bernardino and Los Padres - have comprehensive land management plans which identify actions that can be taken to reduce threats to the toad.

Several large-scale Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs) have also been developed in portions of the species' range, such as the Western Riverside County Multiple Species HCP, the San Diego County Multiple Species Conservation Program, and Multiple Habitat Conservation Program in northern San Diego County.

A copy of the proposed rule is on view at the [Federal Register](#) today and will officially publish on March 27, 2014.

The Service will accept comments and information about the proposal from March 27 through May 27, 2014. Comments can be submitted online at the Federal eRulemaking Portal at <http://www.regulations.gov>. Look for the Search box and enter Docket No. FWS-R8-ES-2014-0007.

Submit comments by U.S. mail or hand-delivery to: Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS-R8-ES-2014-0007; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 222; Arlington, VA, 22203.

Written requests for a hearing on this proposal will be accepted until May 12, 2014, and should be sent to Acting Field Supervisor, Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office, 2493 Portola Road, Suite B, Ventura, California 93003.

For more information about the proposed downlisting rule for the arroyo toad, please visit: <http://www.fws.gov/ventura>.

Photos of the toad are available on the Service's Pacific Southwest Region Flickr page [[arroyo toad](#)].

The ESA provides a critical safety net for America's native fish, wildlife and plants. This landmark conservation law has prevented the extinction of hundreds of imperiled species and promoted the recovery of many others, including America's national bird the bald eagle.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov/cno. Connect with our Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/usfwspacificsouthwest>, follow our tweets at <http://twitter.com/USFWSPacSWest>, watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our Flickr page at http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfws_pacificsw/

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Della Snyder-Velto, Senior Biologist/Fire Ecologist
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office
2493 Portola Road, Suite B, Ventura, CA 93003
(626) 574-5254 (Mon, Tues, Fri)
(909) 982-1826 (Wed, Thurs)
della_snyder-velto@fws.gov