



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

NEWS RELEASE

SNAKE RIVER FISH AND WILDLIFE OFFICE

1387 S. Vinnell Way, Room 341 • Boise, Idaho 83709
(208) 378-5243 • FAX (208) 378-5262

Contact: Ben Matibag, (208) 378-5243

August 3, 2005

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE SEEKS PUBLIC REVIEW OF DRAFT "BEST AVAILABLE BIOLOGICAL SCIENCE" SPRINGSNAIL DOCUMENT

Public comment accepted through September 9, 2005

The Pacific Region of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced today it is seeking public review and comment on a draft document that it considers to be the best available scientific information on the Idaho springsnail, the Jackson Lake springsnail, the Harney Lake springsnail, and the Columbia springsnail.

The draft document, entitled "Best Available Biological Information for Four Petitioned Species in Idaho, Oregon, Washington, and Wyoming," will be used to help the Service assess the status of the four springsnails. This draft document incorporates data and information submitted during the initial public comment period which closed on June 20. The document will also be peer reviewed by experts outside the Service. Any additional comments and information the public may have pertaining to the "Best Available Biological Information" document will be accepted through September 9, 2005.

The document can be obtained at <http://idahoES.fws.gov>, by contacting Steve Lysne at (208) 378-5243, by e-mail at steve_lysne@fws.gov, or by letter at U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Snake River Fish and Wildlife Office, 1387 S. Vinnell Way, Room 368, Boise, Idaho 83709.

"We are in the process of reviewing the status of these four springsnails, and we want to ensure that we use the most current information in our assessment," said Jeff Foss, Snake River Fish and Wildlife Office Field Supervisor. "Public comment and peer review of this draft document will greatly enhance our ability to make a sound finding whether the Idaho springsnail, the Jackson Lake springsnail, the Harney Lake springsnail, and the Columbia springsnail warrant protection under the Endangered Species Act."

On April 20, 2005, the Service published a Federal Register Notice (70 FR 20512) announcing a 90-day petition finding that two springsnail petitions presented substantial scientific information. One petition recommended delisting the Idaho springsnail (*Pyrgulopsis idahoensis*), a species that occurs in Idaho's Snake River near the CJ Strike Reservoir upstream to Bancroft Springs, Idaho. The second petition recommended adding the Jackson Lake springsnail (*Pyrgulopsis robusta*, from western Wyoming), the Harney Lake springsnail (*Pyrgulopsis hendersoni*, from eastern Oregon), and the Columbia springsnail (*Pyrgulopsis spp. A*, from the lower Columbia River) as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

With the two petition findings, the Service has now initiated a comprehensive status review period, called a "12-month status review," to examine whether the Idaho springsnail should retain its current classification as an endangered species. Because a review is also required once every 5 years for all ESA-listed species, the Service elected to simultaneously prepare a 5-year review for the Idaho springsnail. The Service also began a 12-month status review to examine whether the Jackson Lake springsnail, the Harney Lake springsnail, and the Columbia springsnail should be protected under the ESA. The outcome of these reviews will be announced in the Spring of 2006.

Data, information, comments, or questions concerning this document may be submitted in writing to the Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Snake River Fish and Wildlife Office, 1387 S. Vinnell Way, Room 368,

Boise, Idaho 83709. Comments may also be faxed to (208) 378-5262, or e-mailed to fw1srbocomment@fws.gov. Please include "Idaho Springsnail BAI Comments" in the subject line for faxes and e-mails. If our Internet connection is disrupted, please submit your comments by mail or fax to the contact office above. Comments must be received by 5 p.m. on September 9, 2005 to be fully considered in these reviews.

For more information, please contact Steve Lysne, Fish and Wildlife Biologist, at (208)378-5243 or by e-mail at steve_lysne@fws.gov.

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The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System which encompasses 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.