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Service Protects Six West Texas Invertebrates

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will protect six species of aquatic invertebrates native to west Texas as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The Service has also designated critical habitat for these species in portions of Reeves, Jeff Davis and Pecos Counties.

The six aquatic invertebrates, the Phantom springsnail, Phantom tryonia, diminutive amphipod, Diamond tryonia, Gonzales tryonia and Pecos amphipod are in danger of extinction due to the loss and degradation of the natural springs that support them. All six invertebrate species are entirely aquatic and occur in spring habitats dependent upon surface flows from groundwater sources for their survival, growth and reproduction.

The majority of lands designated as critical habitat are currently managed by The Nature Conservancy, the Bureau of Reclamation or the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Other species that are listed under the ESA occur in these same springs, and the Service does not anticipate additional restrictions on land use in the area as a result of the six species being listed.

“The natural spring systems that support the six aquatic invertebrates are declining, in both quantity and quality. The degradation and loss of these natural springs is not just a problem for the species dependent upon them but may also affect the water supplies of local communities,” said Adam Zerrenner, Austin Field Office Supervisor. “Our goal is to address the threats to these springs for the benefit of the species and local communities by working cooperatively with local agencies and landowners.”

The Phantom springsnail, Phantom tryonia and diminutive amphipod occur in four springs of the San Solomon Spring system, near Balmorhea, Texas. The Diamond Y tryonia, Gonzales tryonia and Pecos amphipod occur in the springs and seeps associated with Diamond Y Spring, north of Fort Stockton, Texas.

The Service has designated 450.6 acres as critical habitat in five units. Four units totaling 9.2 acres are designated for the San Solomon Spring species in Reeves and Jeff Davis counties, Texas. The Service is designating one unit of 441.4 acres for the Diamond Y Spring species in Pecos County, Texas. This unit is wholly owned by The Nature Conservancy.

The final listing and critical habitat rules, the economic analysis and other information about the six west Texas invertebrates are available at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/austin/> and at <http://www.regulations.gov> (Docket Numbers FWS-R2-ES-2012-0029 and FWS-R2-ES-2013-0004) or by contacting the Service's Austin Ecological Service Office at 512-490-0057.

The ESA makes it illegal to kill, harm or otherwise "take" a listed species, or to possess, import, export or engage in interstate or international commerce of a listed species without authorization in the form of a permit from the Service. The ESA also requires all federal agencies to ensure actions they authorize, fund, or undertake do not jeopardize the existence of listed species, and directs the Service to work with federal agencies and other partners to develop and carry out recovery efforts for those species. Listing also focuses attention on the needs of the species, encouraging conservation efforts by other agencies (federal, state and local), conservation groups, and other organizations and individuals.

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. Designation of critical habitat does not affect land ownership, establish a refuge or preserve and has no impact on private landowners taking actions on their land that do not require federal funding or permits. Federal agencies that undertake, fund or permit activities that may affect critical habitat are required to consult with the Service to ensure such actions do not adversely modify or destroy designated critical habitat.

America's fish, wildlife and plant resources belong to all of us, and ensuring the health of imperiled species is a shared responsibility. The Service is actively engaged with conservation partners and the public in the search for improved and innovative ways to conserve and recover imperiled species. To learn more about the Endangered Species program, go to <http://www.fws.gov/endangered/>.

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. Connect with our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/usfws, follow our tweets at www.twitter.com/usfwshq, watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwshq>.

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