

ACTION: Proposed rule; second extension of comment period.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) gives notice that the comment period on the proposed rule to list the Santa Barbara distinct population of the California tiger salamander will be reopened to allow for the inclusion of new information regarding the presence of the California tiger salamander in areas previously not identified as known salamander sites. The extension will allow all interested parties to submit oral or written comments on the proposal.

DATES: The reopened comment period closes June 5, 1999. Comments must be received by the closing date. Any comments received after the closing date may not be considered in the final decision on the proposal.

ADDRESSES: Written comments should be sent to Diane Noda, Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office, 2493 Portola Road, Suite B, Ventura, California 93003. Comments and materials received will be available for public inspection, by appointment, during normal business hours at the above Service address.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Carl Benz, at the above Ventura, California address, phone 805/644-1766, facsimile 805/644-3958.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

On January 19, 2000, the Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) proposed to list the Santa Barbara County Distinct Vertebrate Population Segment of the California tiger salamander, (*Ambystoma californiense*), as endangered pursuant to the Endangered Species Act (Act) of 1973, as amended (Act). An emergency rule listing the population was published concurrently in the same issue of the **Federal Register**. The Santa Barbara County population segment of the California tiger salamander is endemic to low elevation (typically below 300 meters (1,000 feet)) vernal pools and seasonal ponds and the surrounding grasslands, oak woodlands, and coastal scrub of Santa Barbara County, California, and is imperiled primarily by habitat loss from conversion of natural habitat to intensive agriculture and urban development, habitat fragmentation, and agricultural contaminants. The original comment period closed March 20, 2000.

On March 24, 2000, the Service reopened the comment period in response to citizen requests that a public hearing be held. The comment

period was extended until May 4, 2000, during which a public hearing was held on April 20, 2000, in Santa Maria, California.

This second extension of the comment period will enable the Service to consider in its final rule the results of surveys for California tiger salamanders conducted during this breeding season. Written comments may be submitted until June 5, 2000, to the Service office in the **ADDRESSES** section.

Author: The primary author of this notice is Carl Benz (see **ADDRESSES**).

Authority: The authority for this action is the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531-1544).

Dated: May 15, 2000.

Elizabeth H. Stevens,

Acting Manager, California/Nevada Operations.

[FR Doc. 00-12609 Filed 5-18-00; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

50 CFR Part 17

RIN 1018-AE30

Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Reopening of Comment Period on Proposed Endangered Status for the Southern California Distinct Vertebrate Population Segment of the Mountain Yellow-Legged Frog

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Proposed rule; notice of reopening of comment period.

SUMMARY: We, the Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), reopen the comment period on the proposed rule to list the southern California distinct vertebrate population segment (DPS) of the mountain yellow-legged frog (*Rana muscosa*) as an endangered species, pursuant to the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (Act). The comment period is reopened in response to a request from the California Department of Fish and Game for additional time to obtain biological information regarding the mountain yellow-legged frog and formulate comments on the proposed rule. In addition, reopening of the comment period will allow further opportunity for all interested parties to submit comments on the proposal, which is available (see **ADDRESSES** section). We are seeking comments or suggestions from the public, other concerned

governmental agencies, the scientific community, industry, or any other interested parties concerning the proposed rule. Comments already submitted on the proposed rule need not be resubmitted as they will be fully considered in the final determination.

DATES: The reopened comment period closes June 19, 2000.

ADDRESSES: Comments and materials concerning this proposal should be sent to the Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office, 2730 Loker Avenue West, Carlsbad, California, 92008. Comments and materials received will be available for public inspection, by appointment, during normal business hours at the above address.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Glen Knowles, Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office (see **ADDRESSES** section) at (760) 431-9440.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

On December 22, 1999, the Service published a rule proposing endangered status for the southern California DPS of the mountain yellow-legged frog (*Rana muscosa*) in the **Federal Register** (64 FR 71714). The original comment period closed on February 22, 2000. On March 20, 2000, the Service published a notice reopening the comment period for 30 days (65 FR 14936). This reopened comment period closed on April 19, 2000. The comment period now closes on June 19, 2000. Written comments should be submitted to the Service (see **ADDRESSES** section).

The mountain yellow-legged frog is a true frog in the family Ranidae. The southern California mountain yellow-legged frog can still be found in small streams in the San Gabriel mountains, San Bernardino mountains, and the San Jacinto mountains. In addition to predation from trout and other widespread factors, the few remaining frogs are threatened by recreation (i.e. suction dredging, campgrounds, day use areas), the introduction of non-native competitors and predators, and demographics associated with small populations. Comments from the public regarding the accuracy of this proposed rule are sought, especially regarding:

(1) Biological, commercial trade, or other relevant data concerning any threat (or lack thereof) to this species;

(2) The location and status of any additional occurrences of this species and the reasons why any habitat should or should not be determined to be critical habitat pursuant to section 4 of the Act;

(3) Additional information concerning the range, distribution, and population size of this species;

(4) Current or planned activities in the subject area and their possible impacts on the mountain yellow-legged frog or its habitat.

Author: The primary author of this notice is Glen Knowles (see **ADDRESSES** section).

Authority: The authority for this action is the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

Dated: May 15, 2000.

Elizabeth H. Stevens,

Acting Manager, California/Nevada Operations Office.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 660

[Docket No. 000504124-0124-01; I.D. 011900B]

RIN 0648-AK11

Fisheries off West Coast States and in the Western Pacific; Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery; Prohibition on the Use of Set Net Fishing Gear

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Proposed rule.

SUMMARY: NMFS proposes regulations to prohibit the use of set net (gillnet and trammel nets) fishing gear to take groundfish species in portions of the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) (also known as the fishery management area) adjacent to state waters at four areas off California. Groundfish fisheries in the fishery management area are managed under the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish Fisheries off the West Coast (Groundfish FMP). California has jurisdiction over fishing for groundfish and other species both within State waters and, with respect to State registered vessels, in the EEZ off California as long as State regulations are not in conflict with Federal regulations. This action would achieve consistency between regulations in waters under California jurisdiction and those in the EEZ. This action is intended to promote effective and consistent conservation of groundfish stocks and California managed species throughout their range and to avoid

unnecessary bycatch of California-managed species that might otherwise be harvested in the closed areas but discarded.

DATES: Comments must be submitted by June 19, 2000.

ADDRESSES: Comments on the proposed rule should be sent to Rodney R. McInnis, Acting Regional Administrator, Southwest Region, NMFS, 501 West Ocean Boulevard, Suite 4200, Long Beach, CA 90802.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Svein Fougner, Sustainable Fisheries Division, Southwest Region, NMFS, 562-980-4040.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) authorizes regional fishery management councils to prepare and submit fishery management plans (FMPs) to the Secretary of Commerce (Secretary) for approval and implementation. An FMP may incorporate the relevant fishery conservation and management measures of the coastal states, to the extent they are consistent with the National Standards, the other provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and any other applicable law.

The Groundfish FMP was prepared by the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) and approved by the Secretary of Commerce in 1982. The FMP covers fisheries for over 80 species, including species that are taken in the EEZ and in State waters off California, Oregon and Washington. In the absence of Federal regulations under the Magnuson-Stevens Act a state may continue to apply its own regulations to fishers registered under the laws of that State even if they are fishing in the EEZ. Further, even for a fishery managed under an FMP, a state's regulations that affect fishing for managed species may remain in force as long as they do not conflict with the Federal regulations governing that fishery.

The Council recognized that there could be instances in which it might be desirable or necessary to adjust Federal regulations (pertaining to) fishing for species under the FMP to be consistent with state regulations to achieve effective conservation of groundfish as well as non-groundfish stocks that occur in both the EEZ and state waters. Therefore, the FMP contains procedures whereby state regulations can be reviewed by the Council to determine that state regulations are consistent with the FMP. The Council, after making such a determination, may request that Federal regulations be promulgated to ensure consistency in letter and effect.

This is the case with this proposed rule. As provided by the FMP, the Council reviewed for consistency with the goals and objectives of the FMP, California regulations prohibiting the use of set nets in certain EEZ waters adjacent to California waters. In deference to California's historical management of halibut and white croaker and in the interest of sound and consistent fishery management, the Council recommended that NMFS implement regulations to prohibit set net fishing for groundfish species in the portions of the EEZ in the areas currently closed under California law.

There are four California closures that would be affected by this proposed rule:

(1) The portion of the fishery management area in an area between a line extending 245° magnetic from the most westerly point of the west point of the Point Reyes headlands in Marin County and the westerly extension of the California-Oregon boundary; (2) any waters in the fishery management area which are 40 fathom (fm) or less deep at mean lower low tide between a line extending 245° magnetic from the most westerly point of the west point of the Point Reyes headlands in Marin County and a line extending 225° magnetic from Pillar Point at half Moon Bay in San Mateo County, and 60 fm or less deep at mean lower low tide between a line extending 225° magnetic from Pillar Point at Half Moon Bay in San Mateo County to a line extending 220° magnetic from the mouth of Waddell Creek in Santa Cruz County; (3) any waters in the fishery management area that are 30 fm or less deep at mean lower low tide within the portion of California District 18 north of a line extending due west from Point Sal in Santa Barbara County; and (4) any waters in the fishery management area that are less than 35 fm deep in the area between a line running 180° true from Point Fermin and a line running 270° true from the south jetty of Newport Harbor. This last area is called Huntington Flats.

The primary goal of closures (1) through (3) was to minimize entanglement and drowning of protected birds and marine mammals off central California. Federal studies confirm that the take of sea otters and harbor porpoises has decreased significantly since California established set net closures in coastal waters. Closure (4) was the result of the Marine Resources Protection Act (MRPA), which was adopted through voters' approval of a ballot initiative (Proposition 132) in 1990. As in central California, several set net prohibitions in southern California were motivated