

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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A TEXAS TOAD'S LAST STAND

Critical habitat has been proposed for the Houston toad, a small and endangered brown frog inhabiting central Texas, Keith M. Schreiner, Associate Director of the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, announced today. The proposal was published in the May 26, 1977, Federal Register. Interested persons have until August 24, 1977, to comment on the proposal.

Critical habitat designation means that all agencies of the Federal Government must ensure that none of their actions impinge on the needs of an endangered species.

The Houston toad is among the rarest and most critically endangered amphibians in the United States and has been officially listed as endangered since 1970. Much of the hope for the survival and recovery of this species depends upon the maintenance of suitable, undisturbed habitat. For several years, the Fish and Wildlife Service has recognized the plight of this species and has provided funds for a survey of the few remaining populations.

In late 1976, the Service received the results of an extensive survey of suitable habitat of central Texas and its resident Houston toads. Four major areas, one in Burleson, one in Bastrop, and two in Harris Counties, were found to contain this secretive, shy species. These areas contain the last remaining habitat and breeding sites for the species; therefore, the Fish and Wildlife Service has decided to propose these areas as critical habitat under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

The main threat facing the Houston toad is from agricultural and urban expansion, particularly in suburban Houston (Harris County) where two of the major "toad habitats" occur. By declaring critical habitat for all populations, it is hoped that the survival of this unique species will be ensured.

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