

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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TEXAS FISH AND SALAMANDER PROPOSED FOR ENDANGERED AND THREATENED SPECIES LISTS

A fish and salamander from central Texas have been proposed for the endangered species and the threatened species lists by the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Keith M. Schreiner, Associate Director, announced today.

This action published in the July 17, 1978, Federal Register, proposes to list the San Marcos gambusia as endangered and the San Marcos salamander as threatened, and identifies proposed critical habitat for each.

The fish and the salamander live only in San Marcos Spring and the area of its outflow into the upper portion of the San Marcos River. Both are jeopardized by the threat of lowered stream flows caused by pumping of ground water in the area. Flow projections for San Marcos Spring indicate that it may flow only intermittently by 1985.

"Endangered" means that a species is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range. "Threatened" means that a species is likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future.

The San Marcos gambusia lives only in shallow, slow water without dense aquatic vegetation, and changes in the river channel could exterminate it. In 1969 the population was estimated to be less than 1,000; a survey in 1974 found only one of the fish, and surveys in 1976 found none. Biologists do not know exactly what has caused the species to decline, but

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a severe flood of the San Marcos River in 1970 is thought to have been a contributing factor. Some biologists believe the species may already be extinct.

The San Marcos salamander lives mainly in dense mats of algae in a small part of the San Marcos Spring Lake. Its population is presently rather large and stable, but the continued removal of ground water could severely affect the salamander's habitat and lead to its eventual extinction.

The area proposed as critical habitat for the two species includes San Marcos Spring Lake and its outflow, the San Marcos River, downstream to the county road crossing about 0.5 mile below Interstate Highway 35 bridge in Hays County, Texas.

Designating the area as "critical habitat" under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act would affect only the actions of Federal agencies. These agencies would be required to ensure that actions authorized, funded, or carried out by them would not result in the destruction or adverse modification of the critical habitat of the San Marcos gambusia and the San Marcos salamander.

Persons wishing to comment on this proposal should write to the Director (OES), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240. All comments received by September 15, 1978, will be considered.

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