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AGENDA ITEM NO.: 6

PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING DATE: September 25, 2013

SUBJECT: Listing and Designation of Critical Habitat for the Sierra Nevada Yellow-Legged Frog, the Northern Distinct Population Segment of the Mountain Yellow-Legged Frog, and the Yosemite Toad

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) proposes to list and designate Critical Habitat for the Sierra Nevada Yellow-Legged Frog, the Northern Distinct Population Segment of the Mountain Yellow-Legged Frog, and the Yosemite Toad. Critical habitat for these species is proposed in Inyo County and adjacent to the County along the crest of the Sierra Nevada.

PROJECT INFORMATION

Supervisory District: All

Recommended Action: Conduct a workshop regarding the proposed listing and associated designation of Critical Habitat for the Sierra Nevada Yellow-Legged Frog, the Northern Distinct Population Segment of the Mountain Yellow-Legged Frog, and the Yosemite Toad

Project Planner: Elaine Kabala, Associate Planner

BACKGROUND

After numerous lawsuits from the Center for Biological Diversity, USFWS proposes to list the Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog and the northern distinct population of the mountain yellow-legged frog as endangered, and the Yosemite toad as threatened pursuant to the Federal Endangered Species Act.¹ Concurrently, USFWS proposes to designate critical habitat for the species, including in Inyo County in and around Rock Creek Lake, Pine Creek Canyon, Mt.

¹ Additional information regarding the proposed rules can be accessed from the Planning Department's website here - http://inyoplanning.org/projects/USFW_YellowLeggedFrog.htm.

Tom, Bishop Creek (including South Lake), Coyote Flat, Big Pine Creek, and Onion Valley. Primary threats to the various species identified include habitat destruction, recreation (including trout stocking), dams and reservoir diversion, livestock use (grazing), packstock use, roads, timber harvest, fire management activities, disease, climate change, and pollution.

ANALYSIS

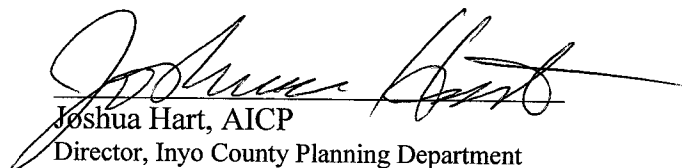
Survival of the subject amphibian species is important to the County's natural history. However, the proposed listing, if implemented, will result in additional planning and permitting burdens in areas where the amphibians could be present, thus increasing administrative costs and potentially precluding activities that have occurred and/or could occur in the future in such areas. The proposed Critical Habitat encompasses extremely important recreational lands to the County, working landscapes, and areas of vital socio-historical significance to local peoples, and their designation as Critical Habitat could severely impact the economy, society, and culture of the County.

The Board has issued correspondence regarding these issues, which are available on the project website. The Board is scheduled to meet with USFWS, U.S. Forest Service, and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife Department staff representatives on September 23. USFWS staff has indicated that additional opportunities for comment will be provided throughout the rule-making process over the next year or so, such as for any public meetings and/or hearings, and for the required economic analysis. Staff is working with Gruen Gruen + Associates to prepare a socioeconomic analysis to assist the County's identification of impacts. County staff is also working on evaluating the scientific data being presented and undertaking public outreach to engage the community.

RECOMMENDATION

Conduct a workshop regarding the proposed listing and associated designation of Critical Habitat for the Sierra Nevada Yellow-Legged Frog, the Northern Distinct Population Segment of the Mountain Yellow-Legged Frog, and the Yosemite Toad.

PREPARED AND APPROVED BY:


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