

**MADERA COUNTY
CALIFORNIA RED-LEGGED FROG RECOVERY PLAN**
Rana aurora draytonii

and

YELLOW-LEGGED FROG CONSERVATION PROGRAM
Rana boylei and Rana muscosa

Guidelines adopted by the Coarsegold Resource Conservation District and the Madera County Board of Supervisors.



RED LEGGED

December 18, 1996

Abstract: *The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed the Red-legged frog, Rana aurora draytonii, as a threatened species under the United States Federal Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, in the Federal Register dated May 23, 1996, and effective June 24, 1996. Scientist, professionals, environmentalists, and landowners all agree, this species is not believed to exist and is extirpated in Madera County. The California Department of Fish and Game Natural Diversity Data Base surveys indicate no recent sightings of this species in the Sierra Nevada mountains south of Amador County. Populations of two Yellow-legged frogs, Rana boylei [foothill] and Rana muscosa [mountain] are extremely rare and declining primarily because of predation from nonnative bullfrogs and fish which occupy the same habitat. Recently the most limiting factor responsible for extirpation and population decline is predation and not the actions of humans or the utilization of the natural resources. This "grass roots" recovery plan is developed by local citizens for the protection and management of the above amphibians and is based on science and common sense for the purpose of meeting the legal requirements of the above Act. No additional governmental regulations or requirements beyond this plan are required for the protection of these species.*

The Coarsegold Resource Conservation District (CRCD) is recognized for the leadership in protection, enhancement management, and utilization of the natural resources of Eastern Madera County. These guidelines were developed to assist landowners in the management and stewardship of their property. The Madera County Board of Supervisors adopted the California Red-legged Frog Recovery Plan and the Yellow-legged Frog Conservation Program on February 11, 1997.

OBJECTIVE:

The purpose of this plan is to protect existing known or identified populations of Rana aurora draytonii, r. boylei, and r. muscosa within the boundaries of Madera County and protect suitable primary habitat of the species so such populations of species can naturally return to historical levels without human intervention. This Plan shall be considered adequate under the California, and Federal Endangered Species Acts to meeting the protection of the species.

HISTORY:

The non native Bullfrog, Rana catesbeiana, shares the same habitat of the Red-legged frog. Species of fish (i.e. bass, sun fish, and trout) not native to the habitat of the Red-legged frog were introduced into the habitat and are also voracious predators of the above amphibians during various stages of life. The primary and life sustaining habitat of Red-legged frogs and Yellow-legged frogs consist of perennial rivers, streams, ponds, lakes, wetlands, and they are seldom found outside a restricted riparian area near waters edge. The habitat of the above amphibian species is not considered suitable if it contains nonnative bullfrogs,

trout, sun fish, bass, or other predators. The Red-legged frog is unable to reproduce in areas that contain both bullfrogs and predatory fish.

REQUIREMENTS:

The following items shall be considered to be adequate protection and management of the above amphibians:

[1] Any individual sightings of the above species identified in suitable primary habitat shall be protected from the direct significant impact of human activity.

[2] Suitable primary habitat shall consist of the immediate area of the wetland, river, perennial stream, lake, pond, and riparian area that are free of nonnative predator species.

[3] Estivate habitat is important only where existing known populations are found in adjacent aquatic and riparian areas. The "1996 Madera County Voluntary Water Quality, Grazing Land, Oak Woodland Conservation Management Guidelines" will adequately protect the estivate habitat.

[4] No buffer areas, or additional restriction on human use or management [beyond those in effect on this date] shall be established adjacent to these potential or existing habitats until an existing population is identified.

[5] Predators shall be considered the most critical element in the survival of the three species, and no additional requirements shall be placed on human activity adjacent to the immediate habitat of the identified individual sightings of the species until the predators are controlled and eliminated from the immediate habitat.

[6] Populations of the species shall only be moved or reintroduced in habitats which are certified to be free of predators and the area must contain a plan for the retention of the suitable habitat, which is specific to the economic and social values and in conformance with Madera County General Plan.

[7] The Constitutional Private Property Rights of landowners shall be respected and preserved in any biological surveys requested in connection with the location of any population of the above species in Madera County.

[8] Private landowners, as trained, shall be considered qualified to identify the three species, plus the predators, on private property. On public lands, the protocol for amphibian surveys as established by the California Department of Fish and Game shall be followed by a qualified herpetologist or a wildlife biologist certified by The Wildlife Society, or trained Registered Professional Forester or Certified Rangeland Manager as licensed by the Board of Forestry, State of California, prior restricting use on or within historical habitat.

[9] On private property the landowner or his representative, having been trained in appropriate methods by the Coarsegold Resource Conservation District, shall conduct an ocular evaluation of potential habitat for any populations prior to any significant habitat modification practice, other than routine, regularly occurring maintenance and continuing or historical grazing practices. [areas intensively managed for agriculture are exempt]

[10] Grazing of domestic livestock within and adjacent to the historical habitat of the species shall be considered compatible, providing established professional range management principles and practices are followed, as outlined in the "1996 Madera County Voluntary Water Quality, Grazing Land, Oak Woodland Conservation Management Guidelines".

MONITORING:

Each year the Coarsegold Resource Conservation District, in cooperation with public agencies and professionals, shall conduct a workshop for County residents in identification and protection of the species. A lifetime Certification of Training shall be issued to all participants. Annually, the CRCD shall conduct a Department of Fish and Game Natural Diversity Data Base Search for the three species and notify landowners of any records for Madera County.

This plan shall be reviewed annually by the CRCD to ensure it meets with the scientific and professional standards to protect the above amphibians. Any proposed changes shall be submitted to the Madera County Board of Supervisors for appropriate action.

COOPERATION:

This plan was developed by the Coarsegold Resource Conservation District's Red-legged Frog Recovery Team.

The following agencies and persons were involved in the development of this plan either personally or from scientific documents provided: Madera County; U.S.D.A. Natural Resource Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency, Forest Service; California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, Department of Fish and Game, Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District, University of California Cooperative Extension; Madera County Cattlemen's Association; Resource Conservation District: Madera, Chowchilla; U.S. Department of Interior: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Federal Register dated May 23, 1996; Larry E. Ballew Registered Professional Forester #1346, and Dr. E. Lee Fitzhugh, Certified Rangeland Manager #24, as Cooperative Extension Wildlife Specialist, Department of Wildlife, Fish, and Conservation Biology, University of California, Davis.