

whose provisions are more narrowly focused than the matters in the instant rulemaking, and believes that suspension of the scheduled filing of comments would be more conducive to orderly rulemaking in the abbreviated proceeding mandated by the CBPA. The comment filing date IS SUSPENDED until further notice from the Commission.

Federal Communications Commission.

Magalie Roman Salas,
Secretary.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Research and Special Programs Administration

49 CFR Parts 192 and 195

[Docket No. RSPA-99-6355; Notice 2]

Pipeline Safety: Enhanced Safety and Environmental Protection for Gas Transmission and Hazardous Liquid Pipelines in High-Consequence Areas

AGENCY: Research and Special Programs Administration (RSPA), DOT.

ACTION: Notice extending comment period and establishing Electronic Public Discussion Forum.

SUMMARY: This notice announces that the Office of Pipeline Safety (OPS) will extend to January 17, 2000, the comment period following the public meeting on pipeline system integrity programs in high-consequence areas. This notice also announces that OPS is establishing an electronic public discussion forum on pipeline system integrity management. OPS requests comments that address how to provide additional safety and environmental protection for gas transmission pipelines and hazardous liquid pipelines in high-consequence areas through regulated integrity management programs.

DATES: No later than January 17, 2000, comments can be submitted over the Internet to the OPS integrity management site at <http://ops.dot.gov/imp.htm>. You may also submit written comments by mail or delivery directly to the Dockets Facility, U.S. Department of Transportation, Room PL-401, 400 Seventh Street, SW, Washington, DC 20590-0001. Comments may be submitted directly to the docket at the following Internet Web address: <http://dms.dot.gov>. Click on "Help & Information" for instructions on how to file a document electronically. All

comments should identify the docket and notice numbers stated in the heading of this notice. Anyone desiring confirmation of mailed comments must include a self-addressed stamped postcard.

ADDRESSES: The Dockets Facility is located on the plaza level, Room PL-401, of the U.S. Department of Transportation building, 400 7th St., SW, Washington, DC. It is open from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except federal holidays.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mike Israni (tel: 202-366-4571; E-mail: mike.israni@rspa.dot.gov). You can access additional information and participate in a discussion forum at the OPS pipeline system integrity management Internet site at <http://ops.dot.gov/imp.htm>.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

On November 18-19, 1999, the Office of Pipeline Safety held a public meeting to discuss the need for additional safety and environmental regulations for pipelines in high-consequence areas (i.e., areas where a pipeline failure could have serious consequences for the public or the environment). The notice announcing the meeting was published on October 21, 1999, at 64 FR 56725. OPS wanted information on pipeline operators' system integrity management programs so that it could incorporate a process into the regulations for validating pipeline system integrity in high-consequences areas. OPS is committed to enhancing protection in these areas for several reasons. OPS and National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) investigations and analyses of major pipeline incidents have underscored the importance of protecting areas of high population density and environmentally sensitive areas. Congressional mandates have directed OPS to undertake various activities in these areas, including requiring periodic pipeline inspections in areas of high population density and in areas unusually sensitive to environmental damage.

Recent OPS initiatives have validated the importance of focusing pipeline resources and establishing higher levels of protection in areas where a pipeline accident could have serious consequences. OPS has seen a wide array of existing operator safety programs that identify, assess, and address all significant risks to the pipeline in an integrated manner. These operator-developed programs closely examine in-line inspection survey data, together with other surveillance and

operating data, (e.g., expected population growth, land use, construction activity along the pipeline) and other information relevant to ensuring the integrity of the pipeline in high population areas and in environmentally sensitive areas.

Need for Extending Comment Period and Opening Electronic Discussion Forum

The November public meeting gathered information from government, industry, and public participants on integrity management programs and how to deal with integrity issues in high-consequence areas. The meeting provided a wealth of information on identifying high-consequence areas, testing and inspection technologies, and using risk data to manage pipeline system integrity. The meeting revealed the complexity inherent in requiring integrity management inspections and programs in high-consequence areas. Breakout sessions addressed the following issues:

- What are the key elements and characteristics of integrity management within companies?
- What are the characteristics of high-consequence areas?
- What are the minimum standards for integrity management programs?
- What elements should OPS review, evaluate, and inspect?
- What means are used to assemble and integrate information?
- What types of information need to be integrated to ensure pipeline system integrity?
- What are the key questions for OPS to ask during an inspection?

At the meeting, OPS announced that written comments on pipeline system integrity management issues would be accepted through December 20, 1999. The questions raised at the public meeting and subsequent discussions with the pipeline industry and regulators have shown that more time is needed to prepare and file comments. Therefore, we are extending the comment period to January 17, 2000. We are also setting up an electronic discussion forum so that we can get a free exchange of ideas on how to implement a pipeline system integrity management process into the pipeline safety regulations. This forum will be open until at least January 17, 2000. The transcript of the November 18-19, 1999, public meeting and public comments concerning issues raised at the meeting are available in the docket, which is accessible at the Dockets Facility or through the OPS pipeline system integrity management Internet site.

After the public meeting, OPS began discussing a conceptual model for ensuring extra protection in high-consequence areas. This model, along with additional information on the public meeting and on pipeline system integrity management issues for high-consequence areas, is posted on OPS's pipeline system integrity management Internet site at <http://ops.dot.gov/imp.htm>. Information on this site includes:

- General Summary of the November 18, 1999 public meeting
- Discussion page for facilitating communication
- **Federal Register** Notice on the November 18, 1999 public meeting
- Meeting Agenda and selected presentations/summaries by various speakers.
- Meeting transcripts for November 18, 1999 public meeting
- Summary of the Breakout sessions
- Conceptual pipeline system integrity management model for high-consequence areas
- Link to the DMS page for submissions to the electronic docket
- Contact (e-mail) information for Mike Israni and Beth Callsen

RSPA encourages all interested persons to access the pipeline system integrity management conceptual model and other background information at <http://ops.dot.gov/imp.htm>.

In particular, OPS wants comment on how to improve protection for the public and the environment for pipelines located in high-consequence areas through a more integrated approach to identifying and addressing risks. Interested persons are urged to present their views on whether and what additional inspection requirements or other preventive and mitigative actions are needed to ensure adequate protection of high-consequence areas. Comments are sought from pipeline companies on the extent of their inspection and testing programs, the types of inspection tools employed, and experience with intervals between inspections and testing. OPS is also interested in comments on the expected cumulative costs and benefits associated with implementing a pipeline system integrity management process, on whether any of these measures would have a disproportionate impact on small operators, and any concerns on the information collection, recordkeeping, or reporting requirements of this initiative under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 USC 3057(d)).

Authority: 49 U.S.C. Chapter 601 and 49 CFR 1.53.

Issued in Washington, DC on December 17, 1999.

Richard B. Felder,

Associate Administrator for Pipeline Safety.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

50 CFR Part 17

RIN 1018-AF83

Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants: 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.

SUMMARY: We, the Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), propose to list the southern California distinct vertebrate population segment (DPS) of mountain yellow-legged frog (*Rana muscosa*) as endangered, pursuant to the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (Act). In southern California, this DPS has been reduced to only a few isolated remnants in the San Gabriel, San Jacinto, and San Bernardino Mountains. Hypothesized causes of the decline include predation from introduced trout or possibly some other widespread environmental effects such as airborne contaminants. These effects have probably acted in combination to produce the decline. The chronology of the decline is not well documented, but it appears that a precipitous decline occurred over the last three or four decades. The decline went largely unnoticed and was not studied. In addition to predation from trout and other widespread factors, the few remaining frogs are now threatened by recreational suction dredging for gold and human activities at campgrounds and day use areas. The remnant populations are so small that they are now at risk from random genetic, demographic, and environmental effects as well. This proposed rule constitutes the 12-month finding on a petition to list the southern California population of mountain yellow-legged frog as threatened or endangered. This proposed rule, if made final, would implement the Federal protection and recovery provisions afforded by the Act for this DPS. We welcome data and comment from the public on this proposal.

DATES: You must submit any comments by February 22, 2000 and public hearing requests by February 7, 2000.

ADDRESSES: You may send comments and materials concerning this proposal to the Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office, 2730 Loker Avenue West, Carlsbad, California 92008. You may inspect comments and materials received, by appointment, during normal business hours at the above address.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ken Berg at the above address (telephone 760/431-9440).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The mountain yellow-legged frog is a true frog in the family Ranidae. Mountain yellow-legged frogs were originally described by Camp in 1917 (as cited by Zweifel 1955) as a subspecies of *Rana boylei*. Zweifel (1955) demonstrated that frogs from the high Sierra and the mountains of southern California were somewhat similar to each other yet were distinct from the rest of the *R. boylei* (= *boylei*) group. Since that time, most authors have followed Zweifel, treating the mountain yellow-legged frog as a full species, *Rana muscosa*.

Mountain yellow-legged frogs are moderately sized, about 40 to 80 millimeters (mm) (1.5 to 3 inches (in)) from snout to urostyle (the pointed bone at the base of the backbone) (Jennings and Hayes 1994; Zweifel 1955). The pattern is variable, ranging from discrete dark spots that can be few and large, to smaller and more numerous spots with a mixture of sizes and shapes, to irregular lichen-like patches or a poorly defined network (Zweifel 1955). The body color is also variable, usually a mix of brown and yellow, but often with gray, red, or green-brown. Some individuals may be dark brown with little pattern (Jennings and Hayes 1994). The back half of the upper lip is pale. Folds are present on each side of the back, but usually they are not prominent (Stebbins 1985). The throat is white or yellow, sometimes with mottling of dark pigment (Zweifel 1955). The belly and undersurface of the high limbs are yellow, which ranges in hue from pale lemon yellow to an intense sun yellow. The iris is gold with a horizontal, black counter shading stripe (Jennings and Hayes 1994).

In the Sierra Nevada Mountains of California, the mountain yellow-legged frog ranges from southern Plumas County to southern Tulare County (Jennings and Hayes 1994), at elevations