



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MEDIA NOTE: March 20, 2023 is World Frog Day

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**PROTECTING THE MOST IMPERILED FROGS IN THE UNITED STATES ON
WORLD FROG DAY AND BEYOND**

*Wildlife Nonprofit Carries Out Place-Based Conservation Actions to
Protect Threatened and Endangered Frog Species Across the U.S.*

UNITED STATES, February 27, 2023 - World Frog Day, March 20, 2023, is aimed at raising awareness of the threats facing these highly beneficial species around the globe. Frogs, which serve as both predators and prey, are critical to the energy dynamics of ecosystems and help regulate pests. In the U.S., the Amphibian and Reptile Conservancy (ARC), a national nonprofit to conserve imperiled wildlife, is observing World Frog Day by focusing on programs to protect sensitive frog species and their habitats in more than 300 locations.

ARC Executive Director JJ Apodaca explained the importance of this work, "Frogs and other amphibians are declining by roughly 4% every year in the U.S., with some species losing ground more quickly. This means that we have to act fast in order to secure the remaining populations. I'm optimistic that we can. We just have to be strategic."

Among the host of factors, from disease to pollution, leading to these declines, habitat destruction and degradation are likely the most impactful. In order to reverse these trends, the most important areas for frogs must be prioritized. Then healthy ecosystems and populations should be restored in these places.

ARC's approach centers around a national strategy implemented locally in 317 Priority Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Areas, or PARCAs, spanning 24 U.S. states. Apodaca said, "These PARCAs were chosen because they contain either high densities of frogs and other amphibians and reptiles (herpetofauna) or large numbers of threatened and endangered herpetofauna species - or in many cases, both."

Within these PARCAs, ARC creates and implements a conservation plan tailored to the area's ecosystem and priority species. Of the 317 designated PARCAs, the organization is currently working on the ground in 19 of them. The conservation plan looks different in each one.

For example, in the Gila PARCA of New Mexico, the focus is on wetland and riparian area restoration and controlling invasive species for the Chiricahua leopard frog. Highly water-dependent, this federally listed threatened species lives in permanent aquatic habitats, including springs, streams, artificial and natural ponds, and lakes.

The [Chiricahua leopard frog's](#) natural habitat has been reduced by 80%, with permanent streams having been impounded, ditched, or disrupted by cattle, leaving populations isolated. The remaining water holds invasive bullfrogs, crayfish, and stocked gamefish that throw the ecosystem out of balance. ARC is working to remove invasive species, restore wetlands, provide alternate water sources for cattle in sensitive areas, and support native fish populations so the frogs can use the aquatic habitats of the region as they once did.

For [gopher frogs](#) in South Carolina, ARC is also focused on wetland restoration in the Francis Marion PARCA. In addition, the organization employs a technique called headstarting. Headstarting involves raising young animals in captivity and then releasing them. Gopher frogs are at their most vulnerable when they are eggs and tadpoles. By raising and releasing juvenile frogs, ARC seeks to increase their chances of survival. The organization is partnering with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, and South Carolina Department of Natural Resources to conduct this program.

This is crucial work. The gopher frog has been designated a Species of Greatest Conservation Need in every state where it is present, from central North Carolina to southern Florida, and is under review for federal protection under the Endangered Species Act. A recent study revealed that gopher frogs have two genetically distinct populations, the Florida lineage and the Coastal Plain lineage. The Francis Marion PARCA population is a part of the Coastal Plain lineage. The researchers concluded that this lineage is more at risk of extinction.

Apodaca explained, "Determining the conservation actions that will make the most difference for these frogs and implementing them quickly is critical for their recovery. ARC is committed to ensuring this happens, not only for these two frog species but for dozens of others across the country because their well-being is tied to ours. When the future is bright for frogs, it's bright for us too."

About Amphibian and Reptile Conservancy (ARC)

Amphibian and Reptile Conservancy, or ARC, is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit focused on identifying and conserving the highest priority places for amphibians and reptiles in the United States. We protect endangered amphibians and reptiles through a strategic, scientific, and passionate approach. We believe the conservation of amphibians, reptiles, and the habitats they depend on is vitally important. To learn more, visit ARCProtects.org.

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