

USACE Natural Resource Management Reptiles & Amphibians



Dusky Gopher Frog

FAST FACTS

REASONS FOR LISTING STATUS: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed this species as Endangered under the ESA in 1973. At the time of its listing, only one population of the dusky gopher frog was known to exist. However, since its listing an additional two naturally occurring populations were discovered.

The dusky gopher frog's naturally limited distribution and small population size increase the species' vulnerability to threats. Historical records exist in Alabama and Louisiana, but currently no populations are known from these states. Possible reasons for extirpation include degradation and destruction of habitat, and altered hydrological patterns. (USFWS)

MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION: The USFWS has provided federal protections under the ESA since 1973. Furthermore in 2015 a recovery plan for this species was finalized. This plan was amended in 2019.

The recovery strategy focuses on enhancing existing populations on tracts of public and private land. Appropriate habitat management includes minimizing soil disturbances and maintaining herbaceous groundcover vegetation. Prescribed burning, especially during the growing season can benefit this species as it maintains open-canopied, grassy wetlands. (USFWS)

HABITAT NEEDS: This frog utilizes both upland habitats and wetland sites.

- Upland habitat is sandy and historically forested with longleaf pine.
- Wetland habitat is utilized for breeding, is typically isolated and temporary in nature, and must be embedded within a forest landscape. (NatureServe)
- Larval habitat consists of depressional wetlands lacking predaceous fish which are acidic, grassy, ephemeral, and isolated. Optimal post-larval habitat is upland habitat with a grassy understory that is dominated by fire maintained longleaf pine. (USFWS)

Description: This frog has a short, plump body with a large head and comparatively small legs. The coloration of the back varies but can be uniformly black or a pattern of brown spots on a dark gray or brown background. The back is densely covered with warts. There are dark spots and dusky markings from the chin to the mid-body area of the belly. Males are slightly smaller than females. (USFWS)

Photos: John Tupy, Shauna Ginger, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Natural Resource Management (NRM)

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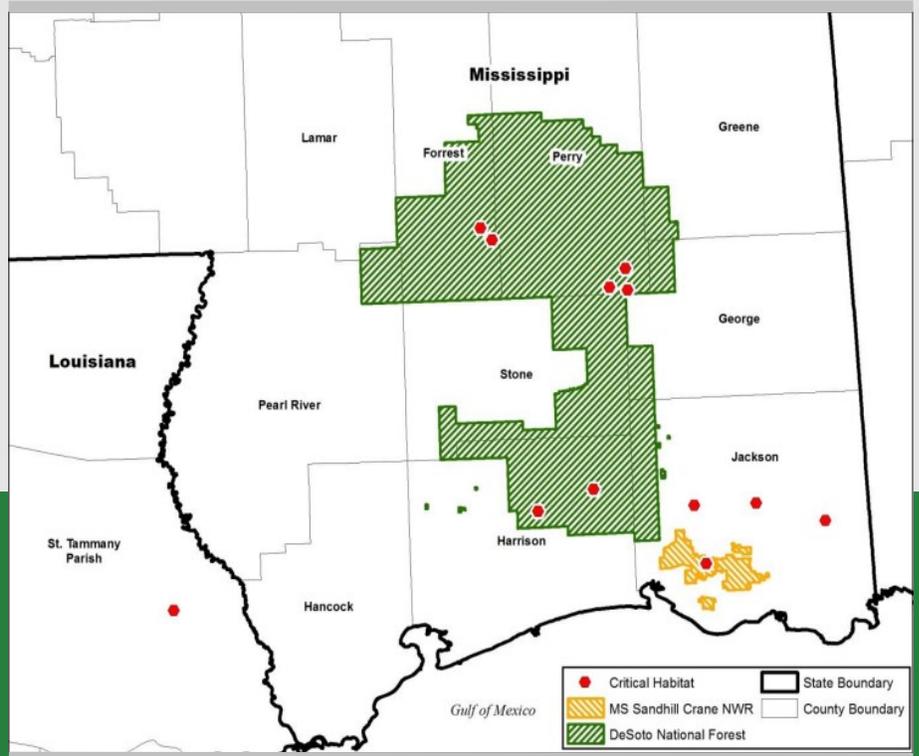
November 2020

USACE ROLE:

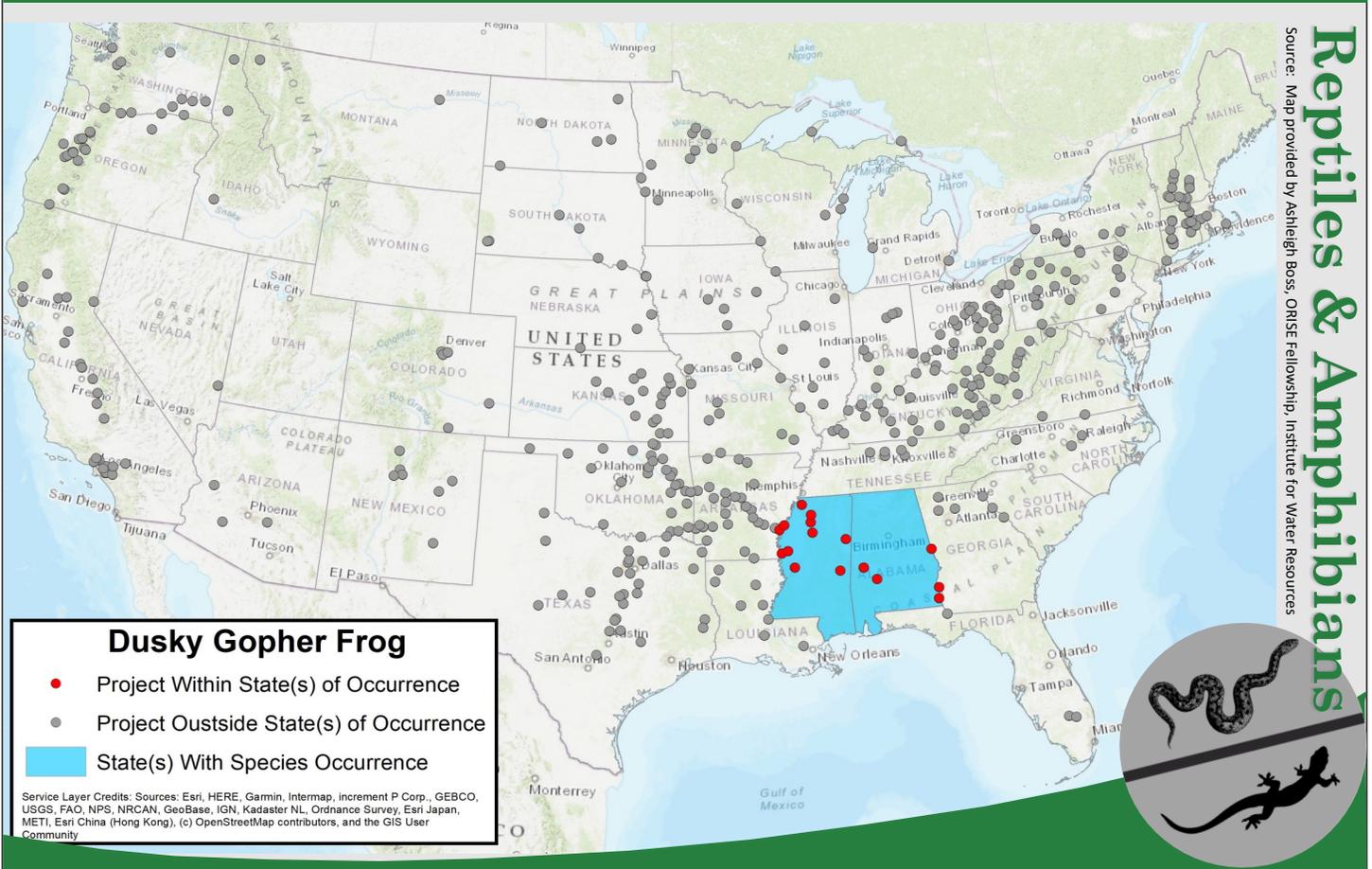
The USACE owns the Ward Bayou Wildlife Management Area (WBWMA) in Jackson county, Mississippi. However, this area is leased to the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks (MDWFP). Together, USACE, MDWFP, and USFWS are working to establish two potential dusky gopher frog breeding ponds on the management area.

WHAT IS USACE DOING:

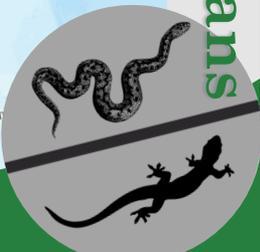
Beginning in 2006, a joint effort to restore one pond and create an additional, nearby pond at the Ward Bayou Wildlife Management Area was initiated. Over time, necessary alterations have been made to both ponds in order to improve the hydrology to benefit the dusky gopher frog. The two ponds will be monitored until it is determined that appropriate breeding habitat for dusky gopher frogs has been achieved and translocations can begin. Additionally, improvements have been made to the uplands surround the two ponds.



Map, above: Critical habitat as designated by USFWS



Reptiles & Amphibians
 Source: Map provided by Ashleigh Boss, ORISE Fellowship, Institute for Water Resources



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- Project Within State(s) of Occurrence
- Project Outside State(s) of Occurrence
- State(s) With Species Occurrence

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