

FSC US CONTROLLED WOOD REGIONAL MEETINGS

DUSKY GOPHER FROG



FOREST
STEWARDSHIP
COUNCIL®

FSC REGION Southeast

HCVS IN FSC A High Conservation Value (HCV) is a biological, ecological, social or cultural value of outstanding significance or critical importance. FSC is working to ensure that our system helps to maintain and enhance the special places that support these values. For more information on HCVs, see the Common Guidance for the Identification of High Conservation Values.¹

WHY ARE DUSKY GOPHER FROGS CONSIDERED AN HCV? The Dusky Gopher Frog is considered an HCV because it is a rare species population with very limited distribution. The species was identified through an analysis of the NatureServe dataset, considering criteria including level of imperilment (both global and state scales), taxa (e.g., vertebrate species), forest habitat dependency, and recency of confirmed occurrences.

SUMMARY OF DUSKY GOPHER FROG The Dusky Gopher Frog historically occurred on the Coastal Plain from eastern Louisiana to the Mobile River delta in Alabama. Now, it is only known from one site in Harrison County and a couple of sites in Jackson County, MS, although there are also active efforts to reintroduce into wetlands in Perry County, MS. It is federally endangered wherever found and is also listed as endangered by the State of Mississippi. The species occurs in upland areas of sandy soils that were historically forested with longleaf pine and in temporary wetland breeding sites within the forested landscape. Most of its life cycle is spent in or near underground areas of refuge that historically were gopher tortoise burrows. Critical habitat was designated in 2012 within four counties in Mississippi and one in Louisiana. Current populations are documented in two of the Mississippi Counties (Harrison and Jackson) and active efforts toward reintroduction are occurring in the third (Perry). The species has not been documented in Louisiana since 1967 and there is no evidence of active reintroduction efforts.



IDENTIFIED THREATS TO DUSKY GOPHER FROG The Dusky Gopher Frog depends on woodlands, forested wetlands and riparian habitats. The major threats to the species include population isolation, urbanization, disease, and a lack of suitable habitat. **Habitat degradation is a significant factor, driven by multiple sources including, changes in forest type from longleaf pine to other forest types, forest degradation caused by grazing and the disruption of the natural fire regime, and land management practices that alter the soil horizon, forest litter, herbaceous community and the occurrence of down woody debris. Timber site prep and other forestry practices that alter temporary wetlands can damage breeding areas.**

¹Common Guidance for the Identification of High Conservation Values (<https://ic.fsc.org/en/what-is-fsc-certification/consultations/archive/hcv-common-guidance>)

WHAT ARE MITIGATION ACTIONS AND WHAT WOULD WE LIKE TO

ACHIEVE? Companies that mix FSC-certified forest materials and non-certified materials to make products with an 'FSC Mix' claim/logo are required to address certain risks before using the non-certified forest materials. One of these is the risk that their forest materials come from areas where HCVs are threatened by forest management activities. FSC has completed a US National Risk Assessment to identify where this risk is greater than 'low' and the Dusky Gopher Frog's range is one of these places - specifically, the portion of its critical habitat that occurs in Mississippi, as defined by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. Companies that wish to use non-certified materials from the identified places are required to either avoid sourcing from specific sites where the threats are occurring, or to implement mitigation actions that reduce the risk of sourcing from those sites. For this rare species, any mitigation actions will need to address the threats identified above in **bold**.

The FSC US National Risk Assessment also introduces the concept of holding regional meetings to bring stakeholders together to collaboratively identify effective and practical mitigation actions. We are asking participants to consider landscape-scale mitigation actions, that will help to reduce risks across the landscape in which the companies source forest materials. An effective way to do this may be to build on existing programs and projects that are already tackling these issues. The companies implementing mitigation actions are required to select one or more from the options identified at the regional meetings.

Please help us to determine what these mitigation actions should be, by visiting engage.fsc.us.org and joining the virtual discussion, or attending a regional meeting.

INFORMATION SOURCES THAT MAY HELP GENERATE MITIGATION IDEAS

- [NatureServe Explorer](#)
- [U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service – Species Profile](#)
- [MS Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks & MS Museum of Natural Science](#)
- [USDA Forest Service – Land and Resource Management Plan for National Forests in Mississippi](#)
- [U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service – Recovery Plan](#)

