

FSC US CONTROLLED WOOD REGIONAL MEETINGS

HOUSTON TOAD

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 IS HOUSTON TOAD CONSIDERED AN HCV? The Houston toad is considered an HCV because it is a rare species with few remaining populations and 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 HOUSTON TOAD The Houston toad is native to the central coastal region of Texas. Populations have been found in nine counties, with the largest in Bastrop County. The species is restricted to areas with soft sandy soils, typically with pine forest, but may also be mixed post oak-woodland savannah. Breeding sites include shallow water of roadside ditches, temporary ponds in residential areas and pastures, and other seasonally flooded low areas. This species is federally endangered wherever found and also listed as endangered by the State of Texas.

IDENTIFIED THREATS TO HOUSTON TOAD

The Houston toad depends on forests and woodland habitats. Habitat conversion poses the most serious threat. **Some forestry practices, such as clearcutting (particularly near breeding ponds and the uplands adjacent to these ponds), are harmful to the species.** Other forestry practices such as thinning and burning, may benefit the toad. Other threats include prolonged drought and the presence of fire ants.

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.

¹ Brown, E., N. Dudley, A. Lindhe, D.R. Muhtaman, C. Stewart, and T. Synnott (eds.). 2013 (October). Common guidance for the identification of High Conservation Values. HCV Resource Network.

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 Houston toad's range is one of these places - specifically, its critical habitat 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](#)
- [Texas Parks & Wildlife](#)
- [International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources](#)
- [The Organization for Amphibian Diversity \(T.O.A.D.\)](#)
- [U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service – Species Profile](#)