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National Ban on Giant Snake Import and Interstate Transport

Boise - The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has finalized a rule banning the importation and interstate transport of four nonnative constrictor snakes. These snakes now are considered invasive species in the United States.

The rule lists the Burmese python, the yellow anaconda, and the northern and southern African pythons as injurious wildlife under the Lacey Act in order to restrict their spread into wildlands. Species like the Burmese python are popular in the pet trade. However, the large snakes have become problematic in places like Florida because they are released and breed in the wild when they become unwanted pets.

The Burmese python is one of the six largest snakes in the world and can reach up to 23 feet in length and a weight of up to 198 pounds.

The four species were assessed by the U.S. Geological Survey as having a high risk of establishing populations and spreading to other geographic areas in that agency's 2009 report *Giant Constrictors: Biological and Management Profiles and an Establishment Risk Assessment for Large Species of Pythons, Anacondas, and the Boa Constrictor*.

"The invasive Burmese python has already caused environmental damage in places like the Florida Everglades. This nationwide ban is an important step in preventing these species from potentially causing economic and environmental damage in states like Idaho," said Celia Gould, director of the Idaho State Department of Agriculture and chair of the Idaho Invasive Species Council.

Idaho has an abundance of geothermal waters. These warm waters could support feral populations of the large, semi-aquatic snakes. The animals are top predators and could potentially impact birds, mammals and other wildlife populations.

"We don't know how these snakes would respond to our climate in Idaho and we don't want to find out," Idaho Department of Fish and Game Director Virgil Moore said. "Constrictor snakes have caused problems for native wildlife in Florida and we can't let that happen here."

Most people who own any of these four species will not be affected. Those who own any of these four species of snakes will be allowed to keep them in Idaho. However, they cannot take, send or sell them across state lines. Those who wish to export these species may do so after acquiring appropriate federal permits.

Under the injurious wildlife provisions of the Lacey Act, the Department of Interior is authorized to regulate the importation and interstate transport of wildlife species determined to be injurious to humans, the interests of agriculture, horticulture, forestry, or to wildlife or the wildlife resources of the United States.

For more information on injurious wildlife and efforts to list the four species of snakes as injurious under the Lacey Act, please visit: <http://www.fws.gov/invasives/news.html>.

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