

✖ If you think the polar bear wrangling has been fun, stay tuned. [FWS has announced](#) that it will review the status of the American pika to determine if listing is warranted (hat tip: [EarthJustice](#)). The pika, also known as the “rock rabbit,” is a cute little creature found in the mountains of the western U.S. and Canada. The key threat to the pika is global warming

While Obama’s Interior Department has disappointed biodiversity advocates with its decision not to revoke the polar bear rule, at least it has shown more willingness to grapple with difficult ESA obligations than its predecessor. The [Center for Biological Diversity](#) petitioned for listing of the pika in 2007, and sued last summer after the Bush administration refused to undertake the statutorily required 90-day study to determine if listing might be warranted. After settling that lawsuit by agreeing to do the initial study, the new administration has decided that the petition presents substantial information indicating that the pika may merit listing because global warming threatens to destroy its habitat. The next step is a full status review, which will consider the impacts of climate change and other factors on the pika, and the extent to which other regulatory mechanisms can control those impacts (that’s a calculation that could change if Congress passes a greenhouse gas bill like Waxman-Markey). By the terms of the settlement agreement, that review is to be completed by February 2010.

UPDATE 5/18: California’s Fish and Game Commission, which last year rejected the Center for Biological Diversity’s petition seeking state listing of the pika, will have to reconsider that decision following [a court ruling](#) that it used the wrong legal standard. (Hat tip: [PLF on ESA](#)).