WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A composition having effective broad spectrum preservation activity comprising: (a) benzyl alcohol, (b) salicylic acid, (c) sorbic acid and (d) a compound selected from the group consisting of 1,3-propanediol, glycerin and a combination thereof, wherein component (a) is present at a concentration of from 70% to 90% by weight, component (b) is present at a concentration of from 1% to 14% by weight, component (c) is present at a concentration of from 1% to 4% by weight, and component (d) is present at a concentration of from 1% to 15% by weight, provided that the total amount of components (b) and (c) is no more than 15% by weight, all based on the total weight of the composition.

2. The composition of claim 1 wherein the composition is substantially free of water.

3. The composition of claim 1 wherein the total weight percentage of component (a), (b), (c) and (d) combined is 100%.

4. The composition of claim 1 wherein component (a) is present at a concentration of from 77% to 86% by weight, component (b) is present at a concentration of from 3% to 12% by weight, component (c) is present at a concentration of from 2.5% to 3.5% by weight, and component (d) is present at a concentration of from 1% to 10% by weight, based on the total weight of the composition.

5. The composition of claim 1 wherein component (d) is glycerin presented at a concentration of from 2% to 5%.

6. The composition of claim 1 wherein component (d) is 1,3-propanediol presented at a concentration of from 2% to 5%.

7. The composition of claim 1 additionally comprises dehydroacetic acid, wherein the total amount of salicylic acid, sorbic acid, and dehydroacetic acid is no more than 15 wt% of the composition.

8. The composition of claim 7 wherein dehydroacetic acid and component (d) are present at a weight ratio range of from 3:1 to 1:1.

9. The composition of claim 1 wherein component (a) is present at a concentration of from 77% to 86%, component (b) is present at a concentration of from 8% to 11%, component (c) is present at concentration of from 2.5% to 3.5%, and component (d) is glycerin present at a concentration of from 2% to 5%, all based on the weight of the composition.

10. A topical formulation comprising a composition of claim 1 and additives selected from the group consisting of solvents, surfactants emulsifiers, consistency factors, conditioners, emollients, skin caring ingredients, moisturizers, thickeners, lubricants, fillers, anti-oxidants, other preservatives, active ingredients, fragrances and mixtures thereof.

11. The topical formulation of claim 10 wherein composition of claim 1 is present at a concentration of from 0.5% to 1.5% based on the weight of the formulation.

12. The topical formulation of claim 11 wherein composition of claim 1 is present at a concentration of from 0.6% to 1% based on the weight of the formulation.

13. The topical formulation of claim 10 wherein the formulation is in the form of an oil-in-water emulsion.

14. The topical formulation of claim 10 wherein the formulation is in the form of a water-in-oil emulsion.

15. A composition having effective broad spectrum preservation activity consisting of: (a) benzyl alcohol, (b) salicylic acid, (c) sorbic acid and (d) a compound selected from the group consisting of 1,3-propanediol, glycerin and a combination thereof; and (e) optionally, dehydroacetic acid, wherein component (a) is present at a concentration of from 70% to 90% by weight, component (b) is present at a concentration of from 1% to 13% by weight, component (c) is present at a concentration of from 1% to 4% by weight, and component (d) is present at a concentration of from 1% to 15% by weight, and wherein total amount of components (b), (c) and (e) is no more than 15% by weight, all based on the total weight of the composition.

16. The composition of claim 15, wherein component (a) is present at a concentration of from 77% to 86% by weight, component (b) is present at a concentration of from 3% to 12% by weight, component (c) is present at a concentration of from 2.5% to 3.5% by weight, and component (d) is present at a concentration of from 1% to 10% by weight, based on the total weight of the composition.

17. The composition of claim 15, further comprising dehydroacetic acid, wherein the total amount of salicylic acid, sorbic acid, and dehydroacetic acid is no more than 15 wt % of the composition.

18. A topical formulation comprising the preservative composition of claim 15 and additives selected from the group consisting of solvents, surfactants, emulsifiers, consistency factors, conditioners, emollients, skin caring ingredients, moisturizers, thickeners, lubricants, fillers, anti-oxidants, other preservatives, active ingredients, fragrances and mixtures thereof.

19. The topical formation of claim 18, wherein the preservative composition is present at a concentration of from 0.5% to 1.5% based on the weight of the formulation.

20. A composition having effective broad spectrum preservation activity comprising: (a) benzyl alcohol, (b) salicylic acid, (c) sorbic acid, (d) a compound selected from the group consisting of 1,3-propanediol, glycerin and a combination thereof, and (e) dehydroacetic acid, wherein component (a) is present at a concentration of from 70% to 90% by weight, component (b) is present at a concentration of from 1% to 13% by weight, component (c) is present at a concentration of from 1% to 4% by weight, and component (d) is present at a concentration of from 1% to 15% by weight, provided that the total amount of components (b), (c), and (e) is no more than 15% by weight, all based on the total weight of the composition, and wherein water is present in an amount of less than 1000 parts per million.

21. The composition of claim 1, wherein the composition has a pH of greater than 7.

22. The composition of claim 15, wherein the composition has a pH of greater than 7.