

## US Fish and Wildlife Service



# News Release

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### **FWS COMPLETES STATUS REVIEW FOR KLAMATH SUCKER POPULATIONS**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced today that it has completed a comprehensive review of two listed fish in the Upper Klamath Basin, the Lost River sucker and the shortnose sucker. The review recommends that the fish should remain protected by the Endangered Species Act by maintaining the shortnose sucker status as endangered species and by reclassifying the Lost River sucker as threatened.

A recommendation to reclassify a species does not automatically result in a change in classification. Any change would require a separate formal rule-making process, including public review and comment, as defined in section 4(a) of the ESA. No change in classification would occur until the completion of that process.

In 2004, in a 90-day finding to a petition to delist the endangered Lost River sucker and shortnose suckers, the FWS announced it would initiate a 5-year review. In 2005, FWS organized an independent review panel of scientists to assist the FWS in evaluating the status of the two species. Based on their report, a FWS panel review, and updated information on sucker survival rates from the U.S. Geological Survey in 2007, the FWS has completed 5-year reviews for the two sucker species. The FWS has determined that the shortnose sucker is at risk of extinction and should remain listed as endangered. The Lost River sucker are not at risk of extinction in the foreseeable future and should be reclassified as threatened.

“The Service remains determined to restore Klamath sucker populations to a viable condition and recognizes the needs of the Klamath tribes who rely on the suckers for its cultural and economic value,” said Steve Thompson, manager of the Service’s California/Nevada Operations Office. “The Service is open to all information and proposals for cooperative efforts to assist the species in the Klamath Basin.”

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The two species occur naturally only in the Upper Klamath Basin. Both species live in lakes and reservoirs most of the year and migrate upstream in the spring to spawn. The Lost River sucker, can reach 39 inches long and can live at least 45 years. The shortnose sucker can reach 20 inches in length and live as long as 33 years.

Sucker populations increased in the early 1990s. However, between 1995 and 1997 suckers decreased significantly again due to a series of fish die-offs, indicating that the population remains at risk. Other factors, including poor water quality, compound the problems of the species. Presently, important cooperative restoration efforts are under way that could help the two species, including habitat restoration, fish screen installation and other activities in the Klamath Basin. The Service is a cooperative partner in federally-funded efforts to improve the status of the two species while maintaining the other important community interests throughout the Basin.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 97-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 547 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies