

LOACH MINNOW
(Tiaroga cobitis)

STATUS: Threatened (51 FR 39468, October 28, 1986) with proposed critical habitat (72 FR 13356, March 21, 2007).

SPECIES DESCRIPTION: A small (less than 3 inches (8 cm) long), slender, elongated fish. Olive colored, with darker, irregular spotting along sides and dull white spots at the base of the dorsal and caudal fins. Breeding males develop vivid red-orange markings.

HABITAT: Bottom dweller of small to large perennial creeks and rivers, typically in shallow turbulent riffles with cobble substrate, swift currents, and filamentous algae. Found below 8,000 feet (2,438 m) elevation. Recurrent flooding is instrumental in maintenance of quality habitat.

RANGE: Historical: Once common throughout much of the Gila River system north of Phoenix, Arizona, including the Gila, Blue, Tularosa, White, Verde, Salt, San Pedro, and San Francisco rivers in Arizona and New Mexico, as well as some of their tributaries.

Current: Present populations are geographically isolated and inhabit the upstream ends of their historical range. The species persists in Arizona in limited reaches in the East Fork of the White River (Navajo County), Aravaipa Creek, Deer Creek, and Turkey Creek (Graham and Pinal counties), San Francisco and Blue rivers and Eagle, Campbell Blue and Little Blue creeks (Greenlee County). In New Mexico, the species is found in the Gila and San Francisco rivers and some of their tributaries, including the West, Middle, and East forks of the Gila River, the Tularosa River, and Dry Blue, Pace, Frieborn, and Negrito creeks in Catron, Grant, and Hidalgo counties. A population was recently found in Bear Creek, a tributary to the Gila River. Populations were reintroduced in Hot Springs and Redfield canyons in Cochise and Graham counties, and in Fossil Creek, Gila County in 2007.

Potential: Undiscovered populations may exist in un-sampled Gila basin streams.

REASONS FOR DECLINE/VULNERABILITY: Habitat destruction due to damming, channel alteration, riparian zone destruction, channel down-cutting, water diversion and groundwater pumping; and the introduction and spread of exotic predatory and competitive fish species.

LAND MANAGEMENT/OWNERSHIP: In Arizona: U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, State, Tribal, and private. In New Mexico: U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, State, and private.

NOTES: A Recovery Plan was completed in September 1991. A copy of the recovery plan and other relevant documents are available online at <http://fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/Loach.htm>. Also, in 2007, we initiated a five-year review and recovery plan update process. These documents will be posted at this website when they become available.