



News Release

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For Release: July 6, 2009

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Fish and Wildlife Service Finds Roundtail Chub Warrants Protection

Following a thorough review of the roundtail chub's status in the lower Colorado River basin, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service finds that the desert fish warrants protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The species will be added to the federal list of candidate species while the Service works on listing proposals for other species that are at greater risk of extinction. The Service will annually review the finding until a listing proposal is published, or a not warranted finding is made based on new information.

Roundtail chub populations in Arizona and New Mexico have been reduced and fragmented due to stream habitat alterations and losses from longtime dam construction, water diversions and groundwater pumping. In the last fifty years, the introduction and increase of predatory non-native fishes has further diminished native fish species, including the roundtail chub.

Numerous conservation actions have occurred for the species in the lower Colorado River basin (below Glen Canyon Dam) under a recent Arizona conservation agreement and a New Mexico recovery program, including the creation of two new populations in Arizona, the creation of a new refuge population in each state, brood stock management plans, and improved monitoring.

"The roundtail is reeling from the one-two punches of habitat loss and the introduction of non-native predators," said Steve Spangle, the Service's Arizona field supervisor. "Since 2006, our state game and fish agency partners have been rapidly building conservation momentum for the roundtail. Their efforts will greatly assist in roundtail conservation, but they are only in the early stages of implementation. At this point in time, the roundtail warrants federal protection."

The roundtail chub will be added to the list of candidate species eligible for Endangered Species Act protection. While candidate species receive no statutory protection under the ESA, inclusion on the candidate list promotes cooperative conservation efforts for these species. The Service's ultimate goal, which is shared by many state wildlife agencies, private organizations and individuals, is to intervene and successfully address the needs of candidate species so that listing is no longer needed.

For example, the Service provides technical assistance and competitive matching grants to private landowners, states and territories undertaking conservation efforts on behalf of candidate species. The Service also works with interested landowners to develop Candidate Conservation Agreements. These voluntary agreements allow citizens to manage their property in ways that

benefit candidate species, in some cases precluding the need to list the species. These agreements can also be developed to provide regulatory certainty for landowners should the species become listed under the ESA.

Addressing the needs of candidate species before the regulatory requirements of the Endangered Species Act come into play often allows greater management flexibility to stabilize or restore these species and their habitats. In addition, as threats are reduced and populations are increased or stabilized, attention can be shifted to those candidate species in greatest need of the ESA's protective measures.

The 9- to 14-inch roundtail chub (also known as the Verde trout and *Gila robusta*) is an olive-gray to silver minnow with a lighter belly. The species was historically considered common in deep pools and eddies of large streams throughout its range in the upper and lower Colorado River basins in Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona. Today the roundtail chub occupies 18 to 32 percent of its historical range in the lower Colorado River basin and is limited to Arizona's Little Colorado, Bill Williams, Salt, and Verde river drainages and Eagle and Aravaipa creeks, and New Mexico's upper Gila River.

The Center for Biological Diversity petitioned the Service to list the roundtail chub in 2003, singling out the lower basin – Arizona and New Mexico – population for protection as a Distinct Population Segment (DPS) under the ESA. In 2006, after review of all available scientific and commercial information, the Service found that the roundtail chub in the Lower Colorado River basin was not discernable from the upper basin population and therefore did not qualify as a DPS. The Center challenged the finding and in a settlement agreement the Service agreed to conduct a new status review and find whether listing is warranted by June 30, 2009.

The 2009 status review determined that the lower Colorado River populations of roundtail chub meet our definition of a DPS. Historical collection records and the scientific literature indicate that there are two population centers, one each in the upper and lower Colorado River basin; for this reason, the lower Colorado River population is discrete. The loss of the lower Colorado River population would amount to the loss of roughly half of the species' range, and loss from 2 of 5 states. This would be a loss of a significant gap in the range of the species, thus the lower Colorado River segment is significant under our DPS policy.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: Photographs of the roundtail chub are available by contacting Jeff Humphrey (602-242-0210 or jeff_humphrey@fws.gov) or at www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/.