



News Release

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STATUS OF TWO RARE SOUTHWEST FISHES DOWN-GRADED FEDERAL CRITICAL HABITAT PROTECTION REVISED

Recognizing a continuing decline in the status of the spikedace and loach minnow, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has changed their status from threatened to endangered under the Endangered Species Act. Prolonged drought, anticipated effects of climate change and the increasing abundance and expanding range of competitive and predatory nonnative fishes have increased the threat of extinction for both species. The original Arizona and New Mexico range for both fish has been diminished 85-90%.

An 'endangered' species is one that is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range. A 'threatened' species is one that is likely to become endangered in the foreseeable future.

Today's announcement also includes the revised designation of 710 stream miles of critical habitat – a designation that elicits federal agencies' support in conserving the habitat value of certain streams when planning or permitting activities.

The Service had [proposed](#) to revise the critical habitat designation to include 830 miles. In arriving at a final determination, the Service excluded streams on Tribal lands in Arizona and those on the private lands of Freeport-McMoRan (mining company) in Arizona and New Mexico due to existing management plans and continued commitments to recovering the fishes on their lands, and the upper San Pedro River in Arizona due to impacts to national security associated with Fort Huachuca (Army). The exclusions total approximately 119 stream-miles.

"Recovering these fish will require the continuing effort of the many partners we have in Arizona and New Mexico, especially the State wildlife agencies," said Steve Spangle, the Service's Arizona field supervisor. "The critical habitat designation identifies the rivers and streams essential to recovery and will improve our Federal partners' continued support of habitat conservation."

Areas designated as critical habitat for the spikedace and loach minnow are essential to the conservation of the species and include streams and rivers typically less than three feet deep with perennial flows. The critical habitat units are in Apache, Cochise, Gila, Graham, Greenlee, Pinal, and Yavapai counties in Arizona and Catron, Grant, and Hidalgo counties in New Mexico. They occur on portions of the Verde, Salt, San Pedro, Gila, San Francisco and Blue rivers or their tributaries, including Aravaipa, Bonita and Eagle creeks.

Critical habitat is a term in the Endangered Species Act that identifies geographic areas containing features essential for the conservation of a threatened or endangered species, and which may require

special management considerations or protection. Designation of critical habitat does not affect land ownership, establish a refuge or preserve, and has no impact on private landowners taking actions on their land that do not require federal funding or permits.

Federal agencies that undertake, fund or permit activities that may affect critical habitat are required to consult with the Service to ensure such actions do not adversely modify or destroy designated critical habitat.

The spinedace is silver-sided and the loach minnow is olive-colored (males are brilliantly colored during spawning). Both the spinedace and loach minnow are fewer than three inches long and require perennial streams, where they inhabit shallow water with moderate to swift currents. Both fishes have been protected as threatened species under the ESA since 1986.

The health of threatened and endangered species is strongly linked to our own well-being. Millions of Americans depend on habitat that sustains these species – for clean air and water, recreational opportunities and for their livelihoods. By taking action to protect imperiled native fish, wildlife and plants, we can ensure a healthy future for our community and protect treasured landscapes for future generations.

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. Connect with our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/usfws, follow our tweets at www.twitter.com/usfwsHQ, watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwsHQ>.

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Note to editors:

Photo support is available by contacting Jeff Humphrey (602-242-0210) or on the Internet at: <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/Fish.htm>