



Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office

Pacific Southwest Region

Service Proposes Revised Critical Habitat for Tidewater Goby

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The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced today that it is proposing to designate 12,157 acres of revised critical habitat for the federally endangered tidewater goby, a small fish that inhabits brackish waters along the west coast of California.

The proposed critical habitat includes land in portions of Del Norte, Humboldt, Mendocino, Sonoma, Marin, San Mateo, Santa Cruz, Monterey, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Ventura, and Los Angeles, Orange, and San Diego counties.

In January 2008, the Service designated 10,003 acres of critical habitat for the tidewater goby. In settlement of a lawsuit by the Natural Resources Defense Council in 2009, the Service agreed to revise critical habitat. Enhanced mapping techniques account for a portion of the new proposed acreage. The Service has also proposed additional critical habitat areas across the range of the species, including areas that are currently unoccupied.

Approximately 53 percent of the proposed revised critical habitat is on state lands. Of the remaining lands proposed as critical habitat, 24 percent are privately held, 10 percent are federally managed, and 12 percent are administered by local agencies. Essential habitat on Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton in San Diego County and Vandenberg Air Force Base in Santa Barbara County is exempt from the proposed designation because these bases have completed Integrated Natural Resource Management Plans that provide conservation benefits to the tidewater goby.

Under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), critical habitat identifies geographic areas that contain features essential to the conservation of a threatened or endangered species and which may require special management considerations. Areas outside the geographic area occupied by the species at the time it was listed under the ESA may also be designated as critical habitat if the areas are essential for the conservation of the species.

The designation of critical habitat does not affect land ownership or establish a refuge or preserve. It does not allow government or the public access to private lands. A critical habitat designation has no impact on private landowners taking actions on their land that do not require federal funding or permits.

The tidewater goby is a small, grey-brown fish rarely exceeding two inches in length. Male tidewater gobies are nearly transparent with a mottled brownish upper surface. Female tidewater gobies develop darker colors—often black—on the body as well as on the dorsal and anal fins. The fish lives approximately one year and occurs in lagoons, estuaries, marshes, and coastal streams. They are occasionally found in freshwater streams that are up-gradient and tributary to brackish habitats.

The proposed rule is available at the Federal Register at <http://go.usa.gov/9RW> or at <http://www.fws.gov/ventura>. For further information about the tidewater goby and the revised proposed critical habitat contact: Michael McCrary, Listing and Recovery Coordinator, Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office by mail at 2493 Portola Road, Suite B, Ventura, CA 93003 or by calling 805-644-1766.

Comments and information on the proposed revision can be submitted beginning on October 19, 2011, by e-mail at www.regulations.gov. At the box that says "Enter Keyword or ID," enter: FWS-R8-ES-2011-0085 and follow the instructions for submitting comments.

You may also submit written comments to:

Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS-R8-ES-2011-0085;
Division of Policy and Directives Management
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
4401 N. Fairfax Dr., Suite 222
Arlington, VA 22203

Comments must be received by December 19, 2011, and requests for a public hearing must be submitted in writing to the Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office by December 5, 2011.

A draft economic analysis of this proposal is in preparation and will be released for public review and comment at a later date.

The Service is working to actively engage conservation partners and the public in the search for improved and innovative ways to conserve and recover imperiled species. To learn more about the Endangered Species Program, visit <http://www.fws.gov/angered/>.

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