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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Endangered Status Proposed for Five Southeastern Fish Species

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced today a proposed rule to list the Cumberland darter, rush darter, yellowcheek darter, chucky madtom, and laurel dace as endangered throughout their respective ranges.

The Cumberland darter occurs in Kentucky and Tennessee, the rush darter in Alabama, the yellowcheek darter in Arkansas, and the chucky madtom and laurel dace in Tennessee.

The Cumberland darter is only found in the upper Cumberland River system above Cumberland Falls in Kentucky and Tennessee. Historically, this species inhabited 21 streams in the upper Cumberland River system. Now, the Cumberland darter survives in short reaches of less than one mile along 12 streams. The rush darter is only found in the Tombigbee-Black Warrior drainage in Alabama. Historically, rush darters were found in three watersheds. Currently, they are still found in the same three watersheds, but with a more limited population distribution. The yellowcheek darter is found in the Little Red River basin in Arkansas. Although yellowcheek darters still inhabit most streams within their historic range, they exist in greatly reduced population numbers in the Middle, South, Archey, and Beech forks of the Little Red River.

The chucky madtom, a small catfish, is found in the upper Tennessee River system in Tennessee. Currently, only three chucky madtom have been collected from one stream (Little Chucky Creek) since 2000. The laurel dace was historically found in seven streams on the Walden Ridge portion of the Cumberland Plateau in Tennessee. Currently, laurel dace's population is found in six of the seven streams that were historically occupied, but in shorter reaches. In these six streams, laurel dace are known to occupy reaches of approximately 0.2 to 5 miles in length.

Primary threats to all five fish species include reduction of habitats and ranges, small population sizes, and vulnerability to natural or human induced catastrophic events, such as pollution and toxic spills.

Critical habitat is not being proposed with this listing rule. The designation of critical habitat is sensible for all five fishes. However, it is not determinable at this time. Further information on these five species and a summary of the factors affecting them were published in the *Federal Register* today.

Copies of the proposed rule are available by contacting Mary Jennings, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 446 Neal Street, Cookeville, Tennessee 38501 (telephone 931/528-6481, extension 203; facsimile 931/528-7075). The proposed rule also is available on the Fish and Wildlife Service's websites at <http://www.fws.gov/cookeville/> or http://www.fws.gov/policy/frsystem/1999rules.cfm?date=10&doc_type=proposed.

Written public comments on this proposed rule to list these five fish species as endangered must be received or postmarked by August 23, 2010, within 60 days of publication in the *Federal Register*. Public hearings regarding this proposal will be held if requested. Requests for a public hearing on this proposal must be received by August 9, 2010, within 45 days after the date of publication in the *Federal Register*.

Public comments must be submitted August 23, 2010, by one of the following methods:

1. Electronically via the federal eRulemaking Portal at: <http://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the instructions for submitting comments. Follow the instructions for submitting comments on Docket No. FWS-R4-ES-2010-0027.
2. U.S. mail or hand-delivered to Public Comments Processing. Attn: FWS-R4-ES--2010-0027, Division of Policy and Directives Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 4401 North Fairfax Drive, Suite 222, Arlington, VA 22203. All comments, including personal information, will be available at <http://www.regulations.gov>.

Federal agencies that undertake, fund or permit activities that may affect endangered species are required to consult with the Service to ensure such actions do not adversely affect or jeopardize the continued existence of the species.

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. Visit the Service's website at <http://www.fws.gov> and <http://www.fws.gov/southeast>.