

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Endangered Status for Five Southeastern Fish Species

The Cumberland darter, rush darter, yellowcheek darter, chucky madtom, and laurel dace are now federally-listed as endangered throughout their respective ranges. The listing of these five fish species as endangered becomes effective on September 8, 2011, 30 days following today's publication in the *Federal Register*.

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. It continues to have a presence in three watersheds: the Turkey Creek watershed (Jefferson County); the Clear Creek watershed (Winston County); and the Cove Creek watershed (Etowah County). However, the fish has a more limited distribution within these watersheds.

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.

A small catfish, the chucky madtom is found in the upper Tennessee River system in Tennessee. Currently, only three chucky madtoms 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.

The ranges and abundance of these five fishes seriously declined due to changes in their stream habitats resulting from mining, agriculture, reservoir construction, channelization, urban sprawl, pollution, sedimentation, and incompatible forestry practices.

The designation of critical habitat also is prudent for all five fishes and will be proposed in the *Federal Register* following the final listing. A 60-day comment period will follow publication of the proposed critical habitat rule in the *Federal Register* at which time the public can provide comments and request public hearings.

All five fishes were candidates for listing as endangered or threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. The Cumberland darter was first identified as a candidate for listing in the 1985 Candidate Notice of Review (CNOR), and the rush darter became a listing candidate in the 2002 CNOR. The yellowcheek darter was included in the 2001 CNOR, the chucky madtom in the 1994 CNOR, and the laurel dace in the 2007 CNOR.

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.

For more information about these five species and a summary of the factors affecting them, please refer to today's notice in the *Federal Register*.

Copies of the final rule are available by contacting Mary Jennings, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 446 Neal Street, Cookeville, Tennessee, 38501, telephone 931/525-4973; facsimile 931/528-7075). The final rule also is available on the Fish and Wildlife Service's website at <http://www.fws.gov/cookeville/>.

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