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Cumberland darter draft recovery plan available for review

The Cumberland darter is a pencil-sized fish that lives in the Upper Cumberland River Basin in Kentucky and Tennessee. It is endangered and protected under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is releasing a draft recovery plan for the fish. The public is invited to submit comments concerning the draft recovery plan through June 4, 2018. The Cumberland darter lives in pools and shallow runs of streams with sand-covered river bottoms in that basin. Threats include a variety of impacts such as sedimentation, disturbance of riparian corridors, and changes in channel structure.

The draft plan describes actions that will help with the recovery of this fish, establishes criteria, and estimates the time and cost for implementing needed measures.

The primary goal for recovery of the Cumberland darter is to ensure viable populations exist throughout the darter's historical range. To achieve this, the Service will continue to work with conservation partners including the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources (KDFWR), Kentucky Division of Water, Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, and U.S. Forest Service.

Conservation and management efforts are needed in each management unit where the darter remains. To accomplish this, the Service and its partners will look for opportunities to use existing conservation programs like the Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife program, KDFWR's Stream and Wetland Mitigation Program, and multiple Farm Bill programs, to work with landowners and implement conservation actions. In addition to actions designed to conserve and restore the darter's habitats and populations, the Service and its partners will address information gaps related to the darter's demographics, genetics, life history, habitat requirements, and threat sensitivity. Captive propagation could be used, as appropriate, to augment or expand the species' current range.

To delist the darter, a viable population must exist in each of the nine management units specified in the darter's draft recovery plan and/or in one additional stream within the darter's historical range. The habitat within these streams must be protected from present and foreseeable habitat threats through recovery efforts like land acquisition, conservation agreements and easements, stewardship, habitat restoration, outreach, and adequate regulatory oversight and enforcement. In addition, the quality within all of these streams must be sufficient to sustain darter populations.

The public is invited to comment on the recovery plan for the next 60 days beginning April 3, 2018, and ending June 4, 2018. To view the recovery plan on the web, please visit <http://www.fws.gov/endangered/species/recovery-plans.html>. Request a paper copy of the plan

and its associated documents by contacting the Service's Kentucky Ecological Services Field Office at 502-695-0468.

More information concerning this endangered fish, including a link to its recovery implementation strategy and biological report (companion documents to the draft recovery plan), can be found at the Kentucky Ecological Services Field Office website:
<http://www.fws.gov/frankfort/>.

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