

News Release
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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Lists Two Freshwater Mussels as Endangered Species

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has listed two freshwater mussels – the rayed bean and the snuffbox – as endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act. The two mussels are found in river systems in the eastern United States.

The rayed bean is currently found in rivers in Indiana, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and West Virginia, as well as Ontario, Canada. The snuffbox occurs in Alabama, Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Ontario, Canada.

In its final rule listing the two species under the ESA, the Service pointed to dramatic declines in their populations. The rayed bean has been eliminated from 73 percent of its historical range, and the snuffbox has disappeared from 62 percent of the streams in which it was historically found. The final rule appears in the February 14, 2012, Federal Register.

Threats to both the rayed bean and the snuffbox include loss and degradation of stream and river habitat due to impoundments, channelization, chemical contaminants, mining and sedimentation. Freshwater mussels require clean water; their decline often signals a decline in the water quality of the streams and rivers they inhabit.

The Service will now work cooperatively with partners to develop recovery plans for the two mussels and coordinate efforts to conserve their habitats.

Under the ESA, “endangered” means a species is in danger of becoming extinct throughout all or a significant portion of its range. It is illegal under the ESA to kill, harm or otherwise “take” a listed species, or to possess, import, export or conduct interstate or international commerce without authorization from the Service. The ESA also requires all federal agencies to ensure actions they authorize, fund, or undertake do not jeopardize the existence of listed species.

More information on mussels and endangered wildlife can be found at www.midwest.gov/endangered

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.