

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Recovery Plan for Two Endangered Snails and an Endangered Mussel Available**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is announcing the availability of the final recovery plan for the Georgia pigtoe mussel, interrupted rocksnail, and rough hornsnail, all federally listed as endangered.

The interrupted rocksnail, rough hornsnail, and Georgia pigtoe mussel have disappeared from 90 percent or more of their historical ranges, primarily due to impoundment, or damming of riverine habitats. All three species are endemic to the Coosa River drainage of the Mobile River Basin in Alabama and Georgia. The Georgia pigtoe also occurs in a Coosa River tributary in Tennessee.

“This final recovery plan provides direction the Service and its partners can take to recover these rare aquatic species,” said Cindy Dohner, the Service’s Southeast Regional Director. “We are working closely with the State of Alabama, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Geological Survey, the Geological Survey of Alabama, industry, universities and conservation groups like the Nature Conservancy on several efforts to benefit these mollusks.”

The final recovery plan describes actions necessary for the mollusks’ recovery, establishes criteria for downlisting the two snails to threatened status, establishes recovery objectives and actions to help us establish criteria for the mussel, and estimates the time and costs for implementing the needed recovery actions.

According to the recovery plan, downlisting of the interrupted rocksnail and rough hornsnail will be considered when we (1) protect and manage at least three geographically distinct populations for each species; (2) achieve demonstrated and sustainable natural reproduction and recruitment in each population for each species as evident by multiple age classes of individuals, including naturally recruited juveniles, and recruitment rates exceeding mortality rates for a period of five years; and develop and implement habitat and population monitoring programs for each population.

Recovery criteria for the Georgia pigtoe will be developed after the Service completes critical recovery actions and gains a greater understanding of the mussel species. Meanwhile, the Service

identifies the following actions necessary to help prevent the extinction of this animal: (1) maintain and where possible implement habitat restoration activities and improve the Conasauga River population of the Georgia pigtoe; (2) develop and implement a monitoring plan to help ensure that the Conasauga River population does not decline further; and, (3) develop a captive propagation program and establish an ark population to help support the Conasauga River population of the Georgia pigtoe; (4) conduct research, such as, identification of an appropriate fish host, that is important to gain better understanding of this mussel's life history; and, (5) identify, monitor, and where possible improve potential reintroduction sites in the historic range of the Georgia pigtoe and reintroduce the species into these habitats.

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 by contacting the Service's Daphne, Alabama, Ecological Services Field Office at 251- 441-5858.

Over the last 75 years, the Coosa River Drainage has been converted from a free flowing riverine continuum to a scattered collection of isolated stream segments some of which now function as refugia for imperiled mollusks. Conservation and recovery of the Georgia pigtoe, interrupted rocksnail, and rough hornshell will require human intervention. It is known that human activities, human population numbers, and associated impacts will change within drainage watersheds. Therefore, to recover these species, it is essential to characterize and monitor aquatic habitats on a watershed scale, and respond to changing conditions rapidly, whether through negotiation and partnerships to alleviate threats, or through relocation or husbandry and reintroduction of endangered species populations to appropriate areas. This approach will require monitoring existing and reintroduced populations of the Georgia pigtoe, interrupted rocksnail, and rough hornshell, and characterizing current conditions within six designated critical habitat units and their watersheds, along with routine periodic monitoring of habitat conditions.

Several organizations are working with the Service to help recover these three mollusks. Some examples of recovery activities discussed in the recovery plan include efforts by the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR), the Nature Conservancy, the Service and other partners to collect brood stock from several populations, initiate propagation and reintroduction protocols, and subsequent monitoring. It also discusses the creation of ADCNR's - Alabama Aquatic Biodiversity Center (AABC) and its efforts to elevate recovery of these mollusks. AABC-led reintroductions and augmentations have been a tremendous asset by successfully reintroducing several imperiled aquatic species over the last two years.

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. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov). Connect with our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/usfwssoutheast](http://www.facebook.com/usfwssoutheast), follow our tweets at [www.twitter.com/usfwssoutheast](http://www.twitter.com/usfwssoutheast), watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwssoutheast>.