



**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
ENDANGERED SPECIES PROGRAM**

TELEPHONIC INTERVIEW Time (8:53)

KENTUCKY ARROW DARTER (HOST – SARAH LEON WITH ROLLIE WHITE, KIM GARNER AND PAUL SCHEERER)

This transcript was produced from audio provided by FWS Endangered Species Program

P R O C E E D I N G S

(Music plays.)

MS. LEON: The Oregon chub, a small fish once on the brink of extinction, now has a more secure future. Conservationists at the state, local, and federal levels have restored habitats and reestablished populations, making it possible to reclassify this species from endangered to the less critical category of threatened. Some threats to the Oregon chub remain, but the fish is now on the road to recovery.

Hello there, this is Sarah Leon for the US Fish and Wildlife Services, and with us today is Rollie White, the ESA division manager, and the service's Oregon Fish and Wildlife office, Kim Garner, a Fish and Wildlife biologist in that office, and Paul Scheerer, of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

As a leader in the effort to recover the Oregon chub and other threatened and endangered fish species, Paul was recognized by the Fish and Wildlife Service in 2006 as a recovery champion. Paul, you've been so imminently involved in Oregon chub recovery. I'm hoping you can get us off to a good start today by telling our listeners a little about this species and its habitat.

MR. SCHEERER: Oregon chub are small minnows that are endemic to the Willamette Valley. That is, they only exist here in the Willamette River. They were formerly common in off channel habitats throughout the valley, and they like very weedy habits here, common kind of swamp-type habitat with a lot of silt on the bottom and a lot of aquatic vegetation. Oregon chub are small minnows. They only get to be about 3 inches long, and they live to be about five years old.

MS. LEON: Now, what were the reasons for this species' historical decline?

MR. SCHEERER: Reasons for the decline include the construction of 13 main stem dams in the Willamette Valley for flood control. In addition to this, there've been construction of revetments to constrain the river as well as draining of bottom lands for agriculture, and all of these things reduce the habitat drastically, these off channel habits disappeared fairly substantially. And then, to make it worse for the chub, non-native fishes were introduced into our valley probably over 100 years ago, and many of these Midwestern game fish, such as bass and bluegill, use the same habitats that Oregon chub use.

MS. LEON: Okay, and I understand a variety of people, agencies, and organizations have contributed to the Oregon chub's comeback. Would you tell us about them and the work they've accomplished?

MS. GARNER: The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), with Paul Scheerer as a key member, have been the leader in the recovery of Oregon chub for many years. They've conducted research, excessive surveys of potential chub habitat, and they've monitored chub populations. They've also been instrumental in bringing together many of our partners, including forming the Oregon chub working group, which has been meeting since prior to listing, and it continues to meet annually to discuss ongoing actions for Oregon chub. Other state partners include the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, the Oregon Department of Transportation, who both manage population on state land.

We have several federal partners as well. The Army Corp of Engineers, who actively manage populations in ponds on Corp owned lands and through the implementation of our Willamette project, biological opinion, which is the biological opinion that was done for the federal dams that Paul mentioned, they provide funding for research, and monitoring, and they're looking at modifying flow and temperature of water releases from the dams to attempt to mimic the natural conditions that supported chub and other native fishes.

The US Forest Service manages populations in the Willamette National Forest and our Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuge complex, work to restore habitat, and manage populations on refuge lands. They also assist private landowners with restoration activities through our partners for fish and wildlife program. Other partners include the city of Salem, the city of Stayton, the McKenzie River Trust, and numerous private landowners.

MS. LEON: All right. So, you mentioned private landowners. How exactly have conservation partnerships with private landowners contributed to Oregon chub recovery?

MS. GARNER: Private landowners have played an important role by restoring and

creating habitat for Oregon chub. We have several populations in ponds on private property. We've previously enrolled two landowners and individual safe harbor agreements, but to streamline the process, in 2009, we created a programmatic safe harbor agreement with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, which private landowners can now enroll under. So, these are voluntary agreements where the landowners agree to take actions that contribute the recovery of Oregon chub.

In exchange for fulfilling these conservation actions, we give them formal assurances that the service will not need any additional management activities without their consent, and we will also not impose additional regulatory restriction on the use of their property. And Paul has worked with private landowners to sign them onto this agreement. He has currently enrolled two landowners and introduced chub into their ponds. And he has several others that are interested in enrolling.

MR. SCHEERER: One of our major efforts to support the recovery, to get the species downlisted was through introductions, and to date, we've attempted 17 introductions, and 14 of these are still going and are fairly successful. And of these 17 introductions, there've been six of them on private lands. And in the last few years, our most abundant populations were two of these introduced populations on private land.

MR. WHITE: Actually, Paul, that's a really good point. It's important to note that not all of those private land owners waited to give them a safe harbor agreement. Now, there are people out there in Oregon chub habitats and territories, that are willing to take the species on even without kind of regulatory assurances, that we're now offering and that's been a key piece, I think, especially for some of our early populations that we were able to establish. We're really fortunate to have those sorts of farsighted individuals that are willing to contribute and shoulder some of the burden of recovery themselves.

MS. LEON: Now, what more needs to be done to achieve full recovery for the Oregon chub?

MS. GARNER: Well, we've substantially reduced the risk of extinction, and will continue to ensure the management of our populations, and work to increase the number of populations through additional surveys and re-introductions. We especially hope to increase the number of populations in our Santiam basin, which is currently our most limiting recovery area. Our next focus will be to determine how to manage chub in connected habitats that more closely resemble their historic habitat.

To assist in this, ODFW is currently conducting research to look at the conditions of populations in connected habitats, and if we can better understand these conditions, and how to minimize the threat of predation, then we may be able to introduce chub into these connected habitats. And ultimately, Oregon chub in these habitats with connection may be less dependent on active management than our isolated population.

MR. SCHEERER: And just to add to that, most of the effort that we've done to date has

been working to protect chub that are primarily in isolated habitats and all of our introduction sites have very low connectivity to the main rivers, which is advantageous when you're dealing with warm water fishes, non-natives, but it has potential genetic implications. So, as Kim mentioned, what we're trying to do now is work in these connected flood plain habitats, understand the conditions that will allow chub to thrive in these habitats in the presence of the non-natives. So, either allow the chub to thrive or somehow reduce the probability that the non-natives are going to expand and become a problem in those situations.

MR. WHITE: I think what I would add is just that the partnership that we've had, certainly with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife but also with the Corp of Engineers, and the Forest Service, and the rest of the entities that are part of the working group, has really allowed us to make substantial gains on the conservation of Oregon chub. The ODFW biologist in charge before we even listed Oregon chub saw the value of establishing the working group and a conservation strategy back then, knew that we were going to go ahead and list the species because we were certainly headed in that direction.

And things looked dire at the time, but because of that foresight and because the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's ability to keep people at the table throughout the process, we've certainly achieved downlisting. The species is now listed as threatened instead of endangered, and I think that recovery is just not too terribly far away if we can keep this momentum going, and that's huge. That's really a big deal and we're really excited about it.

MS. LEON: Well, thank you so much, Rollie, Kim, and Paul. It was a real pleasure having all three of you on today.

For the US Fish and Wildlife Service, this is Sarah Leon. Thanks for listening.