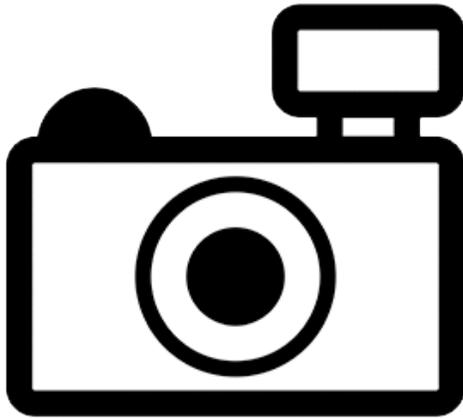


# ***Serrasalmus nalseni* (a piranha, no common name)**

## **Ecological Risk Screening Summary**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, April 2012  
Revised, July 2018  
Web Version, 7/24/2020

Organism Type: Fish  
Overall Risk Assessment Category: Uncertain



No Photo Available

## **1 Native Range and Status in the United States**

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### **Native Range**

From Eschmeyer et al. (2018):

“Amazon and Orinoco River basins: Colombia and Venezuela.”

### **Status in the United States**

This species has not been reported as introduced or established in the United States. No information was found to suggest this species is in trade in the United States.

Possession or importation of fish of the genus *Serrasalmus*, or fish known as “piranha” in general, is banned or regulated in many States. Every effort has been made to list all applicable State laws and regulations pertaining to this species, but this list may not be comprehensive.

From Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (2019):

“No person, firm, corporation, partnership, or association shall possess, sell, offer for sale, import, bring, release or cause to be brought or imported into the State of Alabama any of the following live fish or animals: [...] Any Piranha or any fish of the genera *Serrasalmus*, *Pristobrycon*, *Pygocentrus*, *Catorprion*, or *Pygopristus*; [...]”

From Alaska State Legislature (2019):

“Except as provided in (b) - (d) of this section, no person may import any live fish into the state for purposes of stocking or rearing in the waters of the state.

(b) Live oysters native to and originating from the Pacific Coast of North America may be imported [...]

(c) Ornamental fish not raised for human consumption or sport fishing purposes may be imported into the state, but may not be reared in or released into the waters of the state. Fish wastes and waste water from ornamental fish may not be released directly into the waters of the state.

(d) Weathervane scallops originating from wild stocks or cultured stocks in the Southeastern Alaska and Yakutat Areas may be imported for aquaculture purposes and may be released only into the waters of the Southeastern Alaska and Yakutat Areas under a stock transport permit required by this chapter [...]

From Arizona Office of the Secretary of State (2013):

““Restricted live wildlife” means wildlife that cannot be imported, exported, or possessed without a special license or lawful exemption.”

“Fish listed below are considered restricted live wildlife [...]

Piranha, all species of the genera *Serrasalmus*, *Serrasalmo*, *Phygocestrus*, *Teddyella*, *Rooseveltiella*, and *Pygopristis* [...]

From Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (2019):

“It is unlawful to import, transport, or possess any species commonly known as [...] piranha [...]

“EXCEPTION: These species may be possessed for display and educational purposes by written permit approved by the Commission.”

From California Department of Fish and Wildlife (2019):

“All species of piranha are on California’s list of restricted animals and cannot be imported, transported, or possessed without a permit.”

From Colorado Secretary of State (2019):

“For the following aquatic species or viable gametes thereof, because of the potential for a detrimental affect [sic] on existing fish and their habitat in Colorado, and except as enumerated in these regulations, or as authorized in writing by the Division of Wildlife for management purposes only; the release or the importation, transportation, stocking, sale, acquisition or possession for release is prohibited. Persons who have proof of possession issued prior to January 1,1978 or who obtain prior approval from the Division of Wildlife may possess the following species:

a. Piranha: including members of the genera *Serrasalmus*, *Roosevelthiella*, and *Pygocentrus*.”

From Connecticut Secretary of State (2016):

“The importation or possession of piranha of the subfamily: Serrasalminae, genera *Serrasalmus*, *Serrasalmo*, *Pygocentrus*, *Teddyella*, *Rooseveltiella* and *Pygopristus*, [...] is prohibited except that the Commissioner may at his discretion issue permits for the importation and possession, when it is in the public interest, for public display purposes, of specimens of piranha [...]”

FFWCC (2019) lists *S. nalseni* as a prohibited nonnative species in Florida.

From Georgia Department of Natural Resources (2019):

“The animals listed below are examples of the exotic species regulated under Georgia Law. [...] The exotic species listed below, except where otherwise noted, may not be held as pets in Georgia. [...] Piranha; all species”

From Hawaii Department of Agriculture (2019):

“For example, the following are prohibited from entry or possession by private individuals in the State. [...] *Piranhas*”

From Idaho Office of the Administrative Rules Coordinator (2019):

“No person may possess, cultivate, import, ship, or transport any invasive species [...] into or through the state of Idaho following the effective date of this rule, unless the person possessing, importing, shipping or transporting has obtained a permit under Section 103, or unless otherwise exempt by this rule, as set forth in Section 104.”

“INVASIVE SPECIES – FISH. [...]

05. Piranhas, *Serrasalmus* spp., *Rosseveltiella* spp., *Pygocentrus* spp. [...]

From Illinois Department of Natural Resources (2015):

“For the purposes of Section 20-90 of the Fish and Aquatic Life Code [515 ILCS 5/20-90], the Aquatic Life Approved Species List is established. The following aquatic life categories will be

considered approved for aquaculture, transportation, stocking, importation and/or possession in the State of Illinois.”

*Serrasalmus nalseni* does not appear on the Aquatic Life Approved Species List for Illinois.

From Kentucky General Assembly (2019):

“The live aquatic organisms established in subsections (1) through (7) of this section shall not be imported, bought, sold, or possessed in aquaria:

(1) Subfamily Serrasalminae - piranha, piraya, pirae, or tiger characins; [...]”

From Louisiana State Legislature (2019):

“No person shall have in possession or sell in this state [Louisiana] a piranha or Rio Grande Cichlid; except that, piranha may be possessed and displayed at the Aquarium of the Americas, Audubon Institute, New Orleans, as authorized by a special permit issued by the department, under conditions the department deems necessary to prevent their introduction into waters of the state.”

From Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (2019):

“Unrestricted List [...] (no permit needed): Maine law allows the Department to maintain a list of species of fish and wildlife, including tropical fish and invertebrates, which do not require an importation, exhibition, or possession permit, and may be traded by commercial pet shops.”

*Serrasalmus nalseni* does not appear on the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife’s Unrestricted List.

From Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (2014):

“All aquarium trade fish may be kept without a permit except species categorically non-exempt pursuant to 321 CMR 9.01(3), and except that the following species are prohibited without a permit: [...]

(b) Piranha (*Pygocentrus* spp. and *Serrasalmus* spp.)”

From Mississippi Secretary of State (2019):

“All species of the following animals and plants have been determined to be detrimental to the State’s native resources and further sales or distribution are prohibited in Mississippi. No person shall import, sell, possess, transport, release or cause to be released into the waters of the state any of the following aquatic species or hybrids thereof. However, species listed as prohibited may be allowed under a permitting process where environmental impact has been assessed.”

“[The list includes all piranhas and all species of] Subfamily Serrasalminae”

From State of Nevada (2018):

“Except as otherwise provided in this section and NAC [Nevada Administrative Code] 504.486, the importation, transportation or possession of the following species of live wildlife or hybrids thereof, including viable embryos or gametes, is prohibited: [...]

Piranhas..... All species in the genera *Serrasalmus*, *Serrasalmo*, *Pygocentrus*, *Teddyella*, *Rooseveltiella* and *Pygopristis*”

From New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (2010):

“Species importation list group IV may be for live non-domesticated animals that are considered dangerous, invasive, undesirable, state or federal listed threatened, endangered, a furbearer or any other species of concern as identified by the director. The importation of these species are prohibited for the general public but may be allowed for, scientific study, department approved restoration and recovery plans, zoological display, temporary events/entertainment, use as service animal or by a qualified expert.”

All piranha and pacu (Family Characidae) are listed in Group IV of the Director’s Species Importation List for New Mexico.

From New York State Senate (2019):

“No person shall import, export, own, possess, acquire or dispose of live piranha fish (*Serrasalmus*, *Rooseveltiella* or *Pyrocentrus* [sic]), grass carp (*Ctenopharyngodon idella*) or hybrid grass carp within the state without a license or permit issued at the discretion of the department for scientific, biological or exhibition purposes.”

From North Carolina Office of Administrative Hearings (2019):

“It shall be unlawful to transport, purchase, possess, sell, or stock in the public or private waters of North Carolina any live individuals of [...] piranha; [...]

From Oklahoma Secretary of State (2019):

“Until such time as is necessary for the Department of Wildlife Conservation to obtain adequate information for the determination of other harmful or potentially harmful exotic species, the importation into the State and/or the possession of the following exotic fish or their eggs is prohibited: [...]

“Piranha group: *Serrasalmus* spp., *Pygocentrus* spp., *Rooseveltiella* spp., *Catoprion* spp., *Hydrocynus* spp., and *Salminus* spp.”

From South Carolina Legislature (2019):

“A person may not possess, sell, offer for sale, import, bring, cause to be brought or imported into this State [South Carolina], or release in this State the following species at any stage of its life cycle: [...] piranha (all members of *Serrasalmus*, *Rooseveltiella*, and *Pygocentrus* genera) [...]”

From Texas Parks and Wildlife (2019):

“The organisms listed here are legally classified as exotic, harmful, or potentially harmful. No person may possess or place them into water of this state except as authorized by the department.”

“Piranhas, Family Characidae

All species of genera *Catoprion*, *Pristobrycon*, *Pygocentrus*, *Pygopristis*, and *Serrasalmus*”

From Utah Office of Administrative Rules (2019):

“All species of fish listed in Subsections (2) through (30) are classified as prohibited for collection, importation and possession [...]

(22) Piranha, (*Serrasalmus*, All species) family Characidae.”

From Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (2019):

“A special permit is required, and may be issued [sic] by the Department, if consistent with the Department’s fish and wildlife management program, to import, possess, or sell the following non-native (exotic) amphibians, fish, mollusks, aquatic invertebrates, and reptiles: [...] piranhas [...]”

## **Means of Introduction into the United States**

This species has not been reported as introduced or established in the United States.

## **Remarks**

From Seriously Fish (2018):

“Most experts agree that a detailed revision of *Serrasalmus* is necessary, as historically the genus has been viewed as something of a “catch-all” for similar-looking fin-biting/predatory characins. The juvenile forms of numerous species look broadly similar, characteristically developing the more distinctive adult patterning as they mature. This has resulted in new species being erected erroneously and there have been several attempts to reorganise the group. The most recent major revision was undertaken by Géry in the late 1970s, but a handful of new species have been described since then.”

## 2 Biology and Ecology

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### Taxonomic Hierarchy and Taxonomic Standing

From ITIS (2018):

Kingdom Animalia  
Subkingdom Bilateria  
Infrakingdom Deuterostomia  
Phylum Chordata  
Subphylum Vertebrata  
Infraphylum Gnathostomata  
Superclass Actinopterygii  
Class Teleostei  
Superorder Ostariophysi  
Order Characiformes  
Family Characidae  
Genus *Serrasalmus*  
Species *Serrasalmus nalseni* Fernández-Yépez, 1969

From Eschmeyer et al. (2018):

“**Current status:** Valid as *Serrasalmus nalseni* Fernández-Yépez 1969. Serrasalmidae.”

### Size, Weight, and Age Range

From Froese and Pauly (2018):

“Max length : 12.6 cm SL male/unsexed; [Jégu 2003]”

### Environment

From Froese and Pauly (2018):

“Freshwater; benthopelagic.”

### Climate

From Froese and Pauly (2018):

“Tropical”

### Distribution Outside the United States

Native

From Eschmeyer et al. (2018):

“Amazon and Orinoco River basins: Colombia and Venezuela.”

## Introduced

No introductions of this species have been reported.

## Means of Introduction Outside the United States

No introductions of this species have been reported.

## Short Description

From OPEFE (2012):

“**Characteristics:** Compressed body, high-backed; pre-dorsal spine; pointy snouted; ectopterygoid teeth present usually 4 to 5. Moderate eye diameter. Dorsal fin moderate with 13-14 rays. Adipose fin base is small. Large caudal fin.”

“Vertebrate [sic] 37-38, usually 38. Numerous small scales. Lateral line 80. Prepelvic serrae 24-25, postpelvic 8-10. Branched spines short and the base wide, 23-24.”

“With respect to other species, Fernández-Yépez indicates:

(1) different than *S. elongatus* in the body height; coloration and numerous smaller ventral scales.

(2) different than *S. fernandezi* in the body height; eye diameter; coloration; dorsal base.

(3) different than *S. hollandi* in the body height.”

“**Color of Life:** The body of this species is metallic green with numerous dark spots, some of them larger than the diameter of the eye. Diffused humeral spot. The fins are dark. The caudal fin has a wide basal band. Distally, the fin is hyaline with some pigmentation. Base of the adipose is dark.”

## Biology

No information available.

## Human Uses

No information available.

## Diseases

No information available. No OIE-reportable diseases (OIE 2020) have been documented for this species.

## Threat to Humans

From Froese and Pauly (2018):

“Harmless”

### 3 Impacts of Introductions

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No introductions of this species have been documented.

The importation, possession, or trade of the piranha *Serrasalmus nalseni* is prohibited or restricted in the following states: Alabama (Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources 2019), Alaska (Alaska State Legislature 2019), Arizona (Arizona Office of the Secretary of State 2013), Arkansas (Arkansas Game and Fish Commission 2019), California (California Department of Fish and Wildlife 2019), Colorado (Colorado Secretary of State 2019), Connecticut (Connecticut Secretary of State 2016), Florida (FFWCC 2019), Georgia (Georgia Department of Natural Resources 2019), Hawaii (Hawaii Department of Agriculture 2019), Idaho (Idaho Office of the Administrative Rules Coordinator 2019), Illinois (Illinois Department of Natural Resources 2015), Kentucky (Kentucky General Assembly 2019), Louisiana (Louisiana State Legislature 2019), Maine (Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife 2019), Massachusetts (Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife 2014), Mississippi (Mississippi Secretary of State 2019), Nevada (State of Nevada 2018), New Mexico (New Mexico Department of Game and Fish 2010), New York (New York State Senate 2019), North Carolina (North Carolina Office of Administrative Hearings 2019), Oklahoma (Oklahoma Secretary of State 2019), South Carolina (South Carolina Legislature 2019), Texas (Texas Parks and Wildlife 2019), Utah (Utah Office of Administrative Rules 2019), and Virginia (Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries 2019).

### 4 History of Invasiveness

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History of invasiveness is classified as No Known Nonnative Population. No introductions of this species have been documented, and it is not known to be in trade. Import, possession, or sale of *S. nalseni* is prohibited or regulated by numerous U.S. States.

## 5 Global Distribution

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**Figure 1.** Known global distribution of *Serrasalmus nalseni*, reported from Colombia. Map from GBIF Secretariat (2017). GBIF Secretariat (2017) reported no georeferenced occurrences in the Venezuelan part of *S. nalseni*'s range.

## 6 Distribution Within the United States

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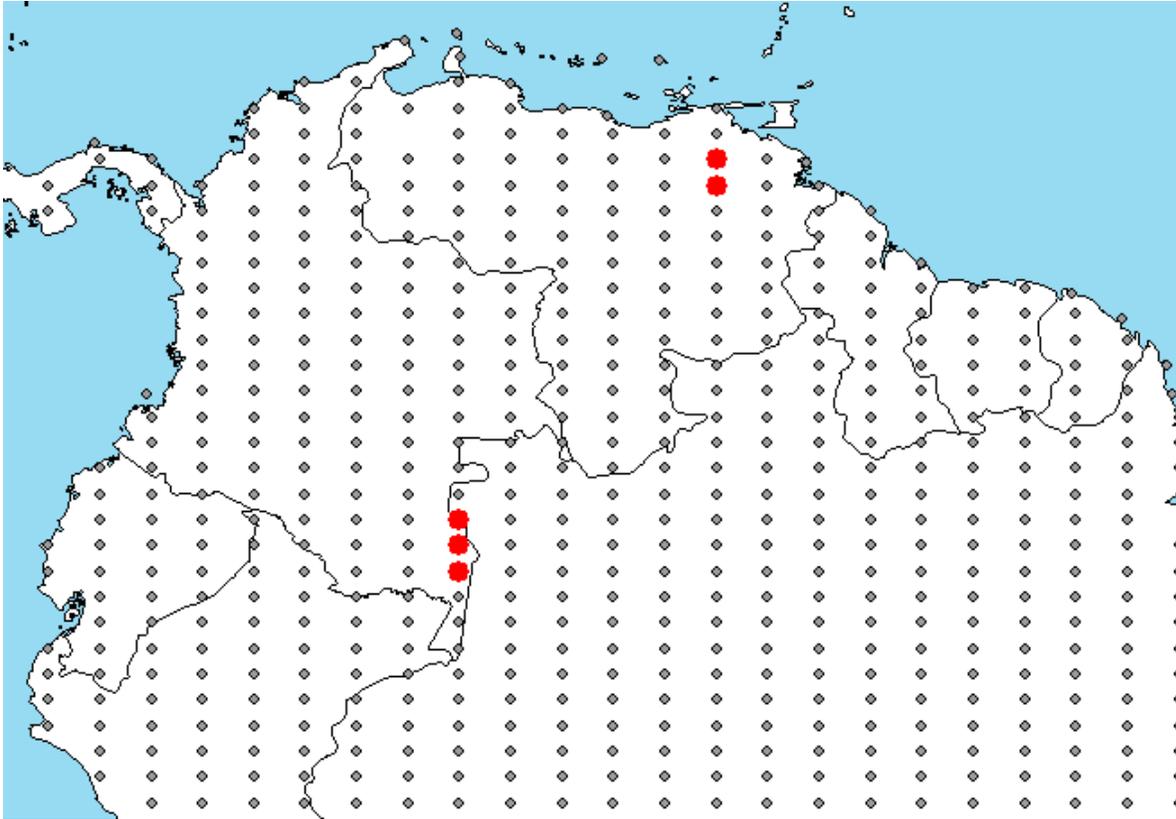
This species has not been reported as introduced or established in the United States.

## 7 Climate Matching

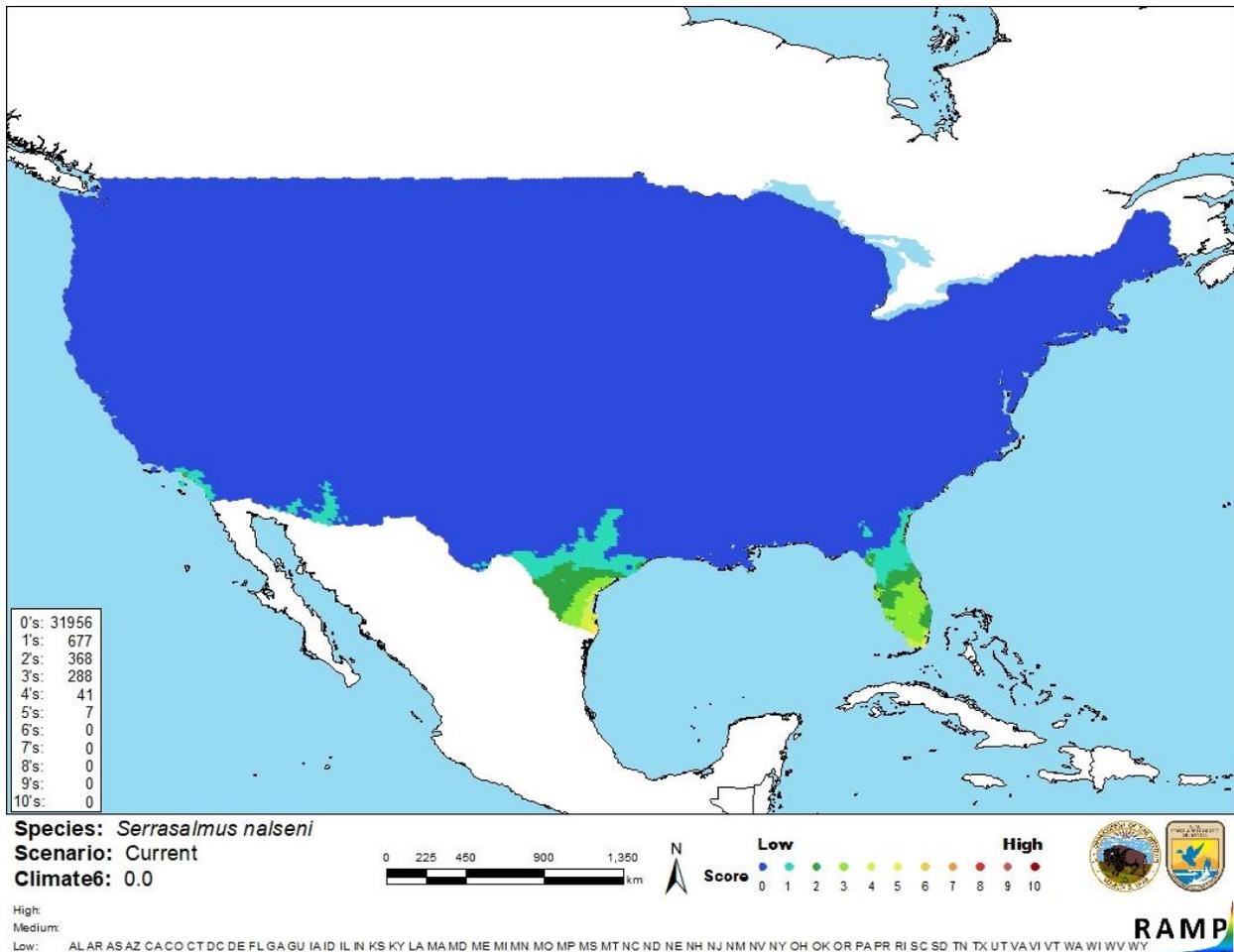
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### Summary of Climate Matching Analysis

The climate match (Sanders et al. 2018; 16 climate variables; Euclidean Distance) was medium in the southern tip of peninsular Florida and the southern tip of Texas. Elsewhere in the contiguous United States, the climate match was low. The Climate 6 score for the contiguous United States was 0.0, indicating a low overall climate match (scores between 0.000 and 0.005, inclusive, are classified as low). All states had low individual climate scores. However, there is considerable uncertainty associated with this climate match because occurrence data were missing for much of the species range.



**Figure 2.** RAMP (Sanders et al. 2018) source map showing weather stations in northern South America selected as source locations (red; Colombia, Venezuela) and non-source locations (gray) for *S. nalseni* climate matching. Source locations from GBIF Secretariat (2017) and estimated from verbal description in OPEFE (2012; Venezuela). Selected source locations are within 100 km of one or more species occurrences, and do not necessarily represent the locations of occurrences themselves.



**Figure 3.** Map of RAMP (Sanders et al. 2018) climate matches for *S. nalseni* in the contiguous United States based on source locations reported by GBIF Secretariat (2017) and estimated from verbal description in OPEFE (2012). Counts of climate match scores are tabulated on the left. 0/Blue = Lowest match, 10/Red = Highest match.

The High, Medium, and Low Climate match Categories are based on the following table:

Climate 6: (Count of target points with climate scores 6-10)/ (Count of all target points)	Overall Climate Match Category
$0.000 \leq X \leq 0.005$	Low
$0.005 < X < 0.103$	Medium
$\geq 0.103$	High

## 8 Certainty of Assessment

Very limited information is available on the biology, ecology, and distribution of *S. nalseni*. The climate match analysis was based on only one georeferenced occurrence of the species and an estimated point based on a verbal description. No introductions of this species have been reported, so any impacts of introduction remain unknown. Certainty of this assessment is low.

## 9 Risk Assessment

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### Summary of Risk to the Contiguous United States

*Serrasalmus nalseni* is a species of piranha native to the Amazon and Orinoco River basins in Colombia and Venezuela. Very little is known about this species. No introductions of *S. nalseni* have been reported in the United States or elsewhere outside its native range. There was no evidence of trade in *S. nalseni* in the United States, but numerous states prohibit the possession or trade of piranhas. History of invasiveness is classified as No Known Nonnative Population. Certainty of assessment was low due to the limited number of georeferenced locations available for the climate match and lack of introductions. The climate match with the contiguous United States was low, with medium matches found only in southern Florida and southern Texas. Overall risk posed by *S. nalseni* is uncertain.

### Assessment Elements

- **History of Invasiveness (Sec. 4): No Known Nonnative Population**
- **Climate Match (Sec. 7): Low**
- **Certainty of Assessment (Sec. 8): Low**
- **Remarks, Important additional information: None**
- **Overall Risk Assessment Category: Uncertain**

## 10 Literature Cited

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**Note: The following references were accessed for this ERSS. References cited within quoted text but not accessed are included below in Section 11.**

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## **11 Literature Cited in Quoted Material**

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**Note: The following references are cited within quoted text within this ERSS, but were not accessed for its preparation. They are included here to provide the reader with more information.**

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