

Background on Modoc Sucker Delisting Decision November 2015

- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is removing the Modoc sucker from the List of Threatened and Endangered Animals, marking just the second-time ever that a fish has been removed from the list due to recovery actions.
- The Modoc's recovery is a big victory for the Endangered Species Act (ESA), states and local stakeholders. The Endangered Species Act is designed to prevent imperiled species like the Modoc sucker from going extinct, by aiding in their recovery so that, one day, federal protections are no longer required.
- Before it was listed under the ESA in 1985, the Modoc sucker was known to inhabit only 12.9 miles of habitat in seven streams within two sub-basins. Now the known distribution of Modoc sucker includes an estimated 42.5 miles of occupied habitat in 12 streams within 3 sub-basins.
- Surveys show that Modoc suckers are well established in each of the streams where they were known to exist historically, and they appear to occupy nearly all available suitable habitat in the streams where they currently found.
- Due to the efforts of state and federal agencies working with landowners, the impacts from livestock grazing have been reduced, with improved grazing management practices and construction of fencing to exclude cattle from riparian areas on several of the streams occupied by Modoc suckers. We thank our private and public landowner partners for helping achieve the recovery of this species.
- The delisting of the Modoc sucker is part of a lengthy, rigorous evaluation process that included best available science, multiple public comment periods and a post-delisting monitoring plan, for evaluating the status of species after it is delisted.

**FAQs Regarding USFWS Modoc Sucker Delisting Decision
November 2015**

Q. What is the Modoc Sucker and where does it live?

A. The Modoc sucker is a small species of fish known to occupy approximately 43 miles of streams within the Upper Pit River Watershed in northeastern California and southern Oregon.

Q. Does the species occur on private land?

A. Fifty-one percent of the species' range falls on public lands (primarily the Modoc National Forest in northeastern California and the Fremont-Winema National Forests in southern Oregon), with 48 percent occurring on private lands, and 1 percent on state lands.

Q. Why is the species being delisted?

A. Due to the success of the ESA and the work of states, federal agencies and landowners, the Modoc sucker no longer faces extinction. In short, the recovery objectives for the sucker have been met and there is no information to indicate that new threats have developed since it was listed.

Q. Are you concerned about threats to Modoc sucker being re-established?

A. While the Service will continue to monitor Modoc sucker populations, we believe all of the threats to the species have been addressed or can be managed. We also believe there is a greater understanding in the community regarding the habitat requirements that this species requires. For instance, the threat of further loss and degradation of habitat has been halted and the perceived threat of genetic introgression from hybridization with Sacramento sucker is no longer applicable given new information. Instream and riparian habitat has been maintained and restored, thereby increasing the carrying capacity for Modoc suckers. Modoc sucker populations appear to have been maintained (remained stable), demonstrating successful recruitment.

Further, additional populations of Modoc sucker have been discovered with the known occupied habitat in effect tripling the known population from the time of listing. This reduces the risk of any single stochastic event affecting all or the majority of populations. Modoc suckers appear to be resilient to drought, as it has persisted throughout its historical range over the past century and has not declined in distribution since the time of listing.

Q. Some suggest the species should not have been listed in the first place?

A. The Modoc sucker was listed as endangered in 1985 because the best available information indicated that it was extirpated from a significant portion of its limited range and required concerted and collaborative conservation to prevent its extinction. At the time of listing, it was known to occur in approximately 13 miles of stream within the Upper Pit River Watershed. This

was due to demonstrated habitat loss and degradation from overgrazing, siltation, channelization, and predation by non-native brown trout.

Q. Several years ago, FWS determined that Modoc sucker populations had grown to the point that the fish should be reclassified or downlisted to "threatened" status. But that reclassification never occurred and the agency was sued into action. Why wasn't this fish ever downlisted?

A. The agency didn't move to reclassify the Modoc sucker as threatened in 2009 because it was very close to being able to completely delist the species. Rather than diverting limited resources into "process" issues, the Service chose to use those resources on conservation actions that, if achieved, would allow the Service to delist the species.

Q. Why was the public comment period reopened?

A. The Service reopened the public comment period on February 13, 2014 for 30 days in order to comply with the public notification requirements of the ESA. This action allowed us to accept and consider additional public comments on the delisting proposal.