

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release May 1, 1975

Levitt 202/343-5634

TROUT PROPOSED FOR FIRST DOWNGRADING TO "THREATENED SPECIES"

The first downgrading of endangered species into the threatened category has been proposed by Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for three species of western trout, Director Lynn A. Greenwalt announced today.

A notice on the proposal was published recently in the Federal Register. Public comments are invited.

Data on the trout--the Lahontan cutthroat (Salmo clarki henshawi), Paiute cutthroat (Salmo clarki seleniris), and Arizona (Salmo apache)--indicate that they are not in danger of extinction. All three species are being cultured extensively in California, Nevada, and Arizona and have been successfully reintroduced into areas they once inhabited. Efforts at eliminating competitors and other trout with which they hybridize are succeeding. Habitat restoration programs have also enabled the species to become reestablished in several streams.

Joint Federal-State attempts at rebuilding viable populations of these trout have been so successful that most streams with suitable habitat have reached their carrying capacities.

Destruction of habitat, not sport fishing, had been the basic reason for the decline in population of the trout. However, the Endangered Species Act prohibits the taking of these species unless the trout are first downgraded from the endangered to the threatened category.

The Endangered Species Act of 1973 established two categories of endangered animals: endangered species, those animals in immediate danger of extinction; and threatened species, those likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future. The previous endangered species law did not have this flexibility.

Final promulgation of these regulations will take into consideration public comments received by the Director. Interested persons should submit written comments, preferably in triplicate, to the Director (FWS/LE), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, P.O. Box 19183, Washington, D.C. 20036. All relevant comments received no later than 60 days after publication in the Federal Register will be considered.

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INT: 4887-75