

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

news release

For Release August 23, 1978

Levitt 202/343-5634

VIRGIN RIVER CHUB PROPOSED FOR ENDANGERED LIST

The Virgin River chub, a small member of the minnow family, has been proposed for the endangered species list because planned modifications to its remaining habitat threaten its continued existence, Keith M. Schreiner, Associate Director of the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, announced today.

The proposal, published in the August 23, 1978, Federal Register, also includes critical habitat for the species. Persons have until November 21, 1978, to comment on the proposed rulemaking.

This chub lives in pool areas in about 125 miles of the Virgin River from the area below La Verkin Springs, Utah, downstream to the backwaters of Lake Mead, Nevada. The river in this section is usually very turbid, warm, and has a high mineral content. It has a sandstone bottom and is erratic in flow. This extremely harsh environment is characteristic of desert streams and is inhabited by a few, well adapted aquatic organisms. The chub inhabits deeper runs and pools rather than shallower water and seldom ventures into tributaries.

Historically, the species was the top carnivore of the Virgin River ecosystem and faced little predation. However, the introduction of exotic species such as green sunfish, largemouth bass, and red shiner into portions of the Virgin River may have increased predation and may partially account for the loss of chubs in areas in Nevada.

Habitat destruction caused by impoundment (Lake Mead) and alteration by reduced flows appear to be the major causes shrinking the range and reducing population levels of Virgin River chubs. Two major projects are planned for the Virgin River watershed which could conflict with the critical habitat now being proposed for the species: the Bureau of Reclamation's proposed desalinization of La Verkin Springs and the Warner Valley (Utah) energy project that would cross Bureau of Land Management lands. The Fish and Wildlife Service expects to consult with both agencies concerning potential adverse impacts these projects might have on this species.

Persons with information who can assist in this rulemaking are invited to write the Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240.

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