

**NEWS RELEASE
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RAZORBACK SUCKER DECLARED ENDANGERED

The Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today announced a final rule designating the Colorado River basin's native razorback sucker as endangered.

The razorback sucker was once considered abundant in approximately 3,500 miles of rivers composing the Colorado River basin, but has been reduced to approximately 25 percent of its historic range. Currently, the largest number of fish is found in Lake Mohave on the Arizona/Nevada border, where it is estimated some 60,000 old adults exist. However, very few juvenile razorback suckers have been collected from Lake Mohave since 1950, and the older fish are expected to survive only another 10-15 years.

"The razorback sucker also occurs in the San Juan River basin, where the Animas-LaPlata water development project is under review," said the Service's Mountain-Prairie Regional Director, Galen Buterbaugh. "However, listing the razorback sucker will have no additional impact on the Animas-LaPlata project since measures identified to offset jeopardy for the already listed Colorado squawfish also will apply to the razorback sucker."

It is estimated that fewer than 1,000 razorback suckers inhabit the upper Green River; observations in other areas are spotty and inconsistent and those taken generally are viewed as incidental captures. Field studies indicate no significant replacement of older fish by viable young fish is taking place in any population.

The razorback sucker grows to more than 2 feet in length and may weigh 6 pounds or more. It is readily identifiable by an unusual dorsal keel behind its head.

Some of the reasons for its decline are dam construction, introduction of non-native fishes, and water diversion or depletion.

The final rule will be published soon in the Federal Register.

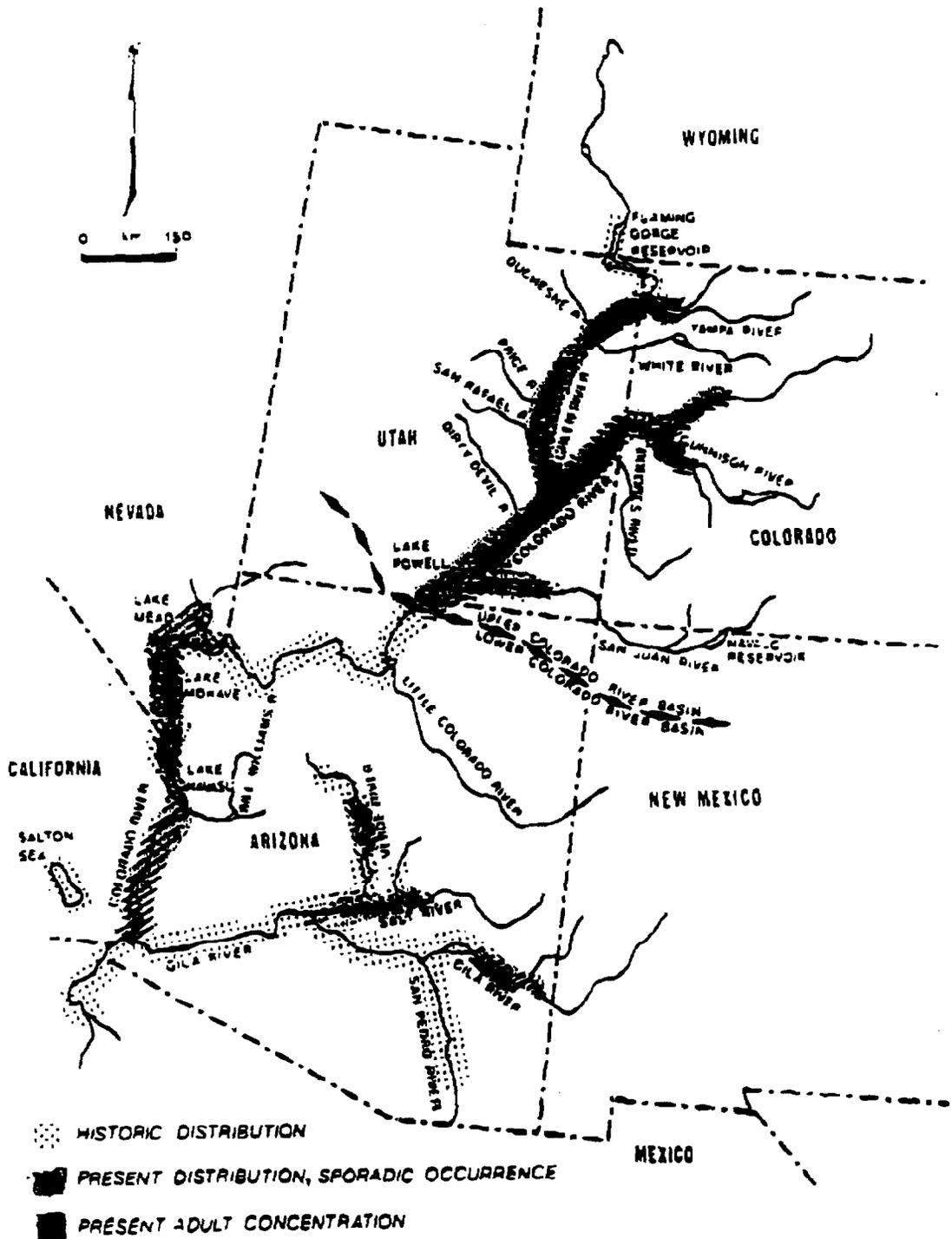


Figure 1. Historic and present distribution and status of the razorback sucker, Xyrauchen texanus, in the Colorado River Basin. Concentration area is an estimated population of > 500 fish.