



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

For Release: June 16, 1994

Georgia Parham 202-208-5634

DEADLINE EXTENDED FOR DECISION ON ALABAMA STURGEON LISTING

Citing scientific disagreement concerning the existence of the Alabama sturgeon, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced a 6-month extension of the deadline for determining whether to protect the fish under the Endangered Species Act.

The Service proposed listing the sturgeon as endangered in June 1993. Under the Endangered Species Act, the Service must, within one year of proposing a species for listing, make a final determination whether to list the species. However, if there is substantial scientific disagreement regarding the sufficiency or accuracy of the available data relevant to the determination, the Service may delay the decision for up to 6 months in order to solicit additional data.

In its decision, the Service said questions remain concerning the viability of the Alabama sturgeon population. Until a single individual was discovered in December of 1993, the most recent documented evidence of the fish's existence was the capture of five Alabama sturgeons in 1985.

The Service said it will initiate additional surveys and solicit more information on the status of the Alabama sturgeon.

(more)

The Alabama sturgeon was once widespread within the Mobile River system in Alabama and Mississippi but has declined in population size and range. It may currently exist only in short, free-flowing reaches of the Alabama River in Clarke and Monroe counties in Alabama.

Concerns have been expressed about the future of dredging and navigation activities in the Mobile River system should the sturgeon be listed as endangered. Service officials have emphasized that such activities are not considered likely to jeopardize the existence of the Alabama sturgeon.

Notice of the 6-month extension and announcement of a public comment period are to appear shortly in the Federal Register.

-DOI-