

News Release

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
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Another Endangered Oregon Fish Recovered Through Partnerships

The Borax Lake chub is fourth Oregon fish delisted from the Endangered Species Act due to recovery in the last five years

PORTLAND, Oregon – Thanks to the enduring and successful conservation efforts of federal, state and local partners, today the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is delisting the Borax Lake chub from the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Threats to Borax Lake and its namesake chub have been eliminated or greatly reduced, and the fish no longer meets the ESA definition of an endangered or threatened species.

“Delisting the Borax Lake chub is a direct reflection of the great conservation work of our partners and our combined efforts to ensure this fish no longer faces the threat of extinction,” said Aurelia Skipwith, the Service’s Director. “We are so proud of the progress being made in recovering Oregon’s native species. These successes exemplify the commitment and dedication of our local, state and federal partners to work together using the tools of the Endangered Species Act.”

The Borax Lake chub exists solely in Borax Lake, a unique spring-fed lake nestled in the Alvord Basin of Harney County in southeastern Oregon. This tiny and resilient fish evolved to withstand harsh living conditions in the remnant desert waters of the Great Basin, including surface water temperatures that can reach up to 104 degrees Fahrenheit.

“Oregon has the only population of Borax Lake chub on the planet, and this minnow exists in one of the most unique habitats in our state,” said Curt Melcher, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Director. “We are proud to have been a partner in this successful effort conserving another native fish species in Oregon.”

In the late 1970s, the Borax Lake chub’s habitat was at risk due to geothermal energy exploration, diversion of Borax Lake’s water for irrigation and legacy effects of mining for borax, a compound used in a variety of cleaning, cosmetic and other products. These threats led to an emergency listing of the chub as endangered under the ESA in 1980.

Since then, conservation partners have spearheaded efforts to protect Borax Lake and its unique chub.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife led monitoring efforts and acquired water rights to protect lake levels; The Nature Conservancy purchased the 320 acres of land containing the lake and the surrounding area and managed it to conserve the chub; and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) designated the adjacent 600 acres as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern, managed to benefit the Borax Lake ecosystem.

Protecting and recovering the chub has also helped protect a biologically diverse desert ecosystem, in turn benefitting hundreds of other species. Partners will continue to work together to monitor and evaluate the status of the Borax Lake chub, its habitat and potential future threats to the species.

“Borax Lake is one of the most unique habitats in the state of Oregon,” said Jeff Rose, BLM Burns District Manager. “BLM is proud to have contributed to the efforts resulting in the recovery of the equally unique fish that inhabits the lake. We want to recognize the local BLM biologists and managers who worked over the years to develop and maintain the partnerships that resulted in the delisting of this fish through appropriate management of public lands in concert with state and private organizations. BLM will continue to manage the area to ensure that it is maintained in a condition that promotes the persistence of the Borax Lake chub and the unique environment in which it resides.”

Although the possibility of geothermal development in the vicinity of Borax Lake remains a concern for the chub and its habitat, the Service has determined the likelihood of this occurring in the foreseeable future is low. The Service will begin implementing a 10-year post-delisting monitoring plan that includes monitoring for new geothermal development proposals, monitoring the fish’s population abundance and the Borax Lake ecosystem, and evaluating the feasibility of establishing a second Borax Lake chub population in the Alvord Basin.

The Borax Lake chub is also expected to be removed from Oregon’s state ESA list and moved to its *Sensitive Species List*.

The Borax Lake chub joins the Oregon chub, Modoc sucker and Foskett speckled dace on the list of Oregon fish delisted from the ESA due to recovery. For information on the Borax Lake chub, please visit <http://www.fws.gov/oregonfwo/>.

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