



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Changing the Status of the Oregon Chub

On April 23, 2010, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reclassified (or “downlisted”) the Oregon chub from endangered to threatened.



Why has the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service downlisted the Oregon chub to threatened? When the Oregon chub was listed under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) as endangered in 1993, it was known to occur at only nine locations within a 30-kilometer (18.6-mile) reach of the Willamette River, representing just two percent of its historical range. Since then, the status of the Oregon chub has improved dramatically, largely due to the implementation of actions identified in the Oregon Chub Recovery Plan. This includes the discovery of many new populations as a result of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife’s exhaustive surveys of the basin, and the establishment of additional populations via successful reintroductions within the species’ historical range. Seventeen years have passed since listing and the species is now relatively abundant and well- distributed throughout much of its presumed historical range. Currently, there are 46 Oregon chub populations, of which 19 have more than 500 adults – well above the goal of 10 populations of more than 500 adults required for changing the species’ ESA listing status to threatened. Most of these populations have some type of protective management and are being monitored regularly. Although many threats have been reduced by recovery efforts, threatened status is appropriate because the species continues to exist in small, isolated populations, and could become endangered in the foreseeable future without the protections of the Act or long-term management agreements and adaptive management actions.

How did the Oregon chub’s status improve? A dedicated partnership of federal and state agencies, local governments, private landowners, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and university researchers has done the conservation work that has resulted in the improved status of the Oregon chub. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and private landowners have played particularly important roles in improving and expanding habitat for the species, using innovative conservation tools such as Safe Harbor Agreements, which help private landowners create and restore habitat for listed species on private lands without creating additional regulatory burdens for the landowners. The Oregon Chub Working Group, which includes the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Portland and the Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuges, U.S. Forest Service, Army Corps of Engineers, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon Department of Parks and Recreation, Oregon Department of Transportation, local governments, NGOs, university researchers, private landowners and others, has worked together since before the species was listed as endangered to identify the causes of the species’ decline and to implement conservation actions that have resulted in the Oregon chub’s improved status today.

What is the difference between “endangered” and “threatened”?

The ESA defines a species as “endangered” if it is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range, and as “threatened” if it is likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

How does the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service downlist a species?

Section 4 of the ESA sets forth the procedures for listing species, reclassifying species or removing species from listed status. We evaluate whether that species may be endangered or threatened due to one or more of the five factors described in section 4(a)(1) of the Act:

- A. The present or threatened destruction, modification or curtailment of its habitat or range;
- B. Overutilization for commercial, recreational, scientific or educational purposes;
- C. Disease or predation;
- D. The inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms; and
- E. Other natural or manmade factors affecting its survival.

We must consider these same five factors in reclassifying or delisting a species. For species that are already listed as threatened or endangered, this analysis of threats is an evaluation of both the threats currently facing the species and the threats that are reasonably likely to affect the species in the foreseeable future following the delisting or downlisting and the removal or reduction of ESA protections.

Will the species receive less protection if it is reclassified? Reclassification does not significantly change the protection afforded to the Oregon chub under the Act. The regulatory protections of section 9 and section 7 of the ESA would remain in place. Anyone taking, attempting to take or otherwise possessing Oregon chub, or parts thereof, in violation of section 9 is subject to a penalty under section 11 of the Act. Pursuant to section 7 of the Act, all federal agencies must ensure that any actions they authorize, fund or carry out are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the Oregon chub. So, with reclassification to threatened, the level of protection will be essentially unchanged.

Where can I get more information?

Visit our website <http://www.fws.gov/oregonfwo/Species/Data/OregonChub/> for more information about the species or to view a copy of the reclassification rule, or contact Cat Brown at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service office in Portland at 503-231-6179.