



News Release

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SERVICE ANNOUNCES AVAILABILITY OF DRAFT ECONOMIC ANALYSIS AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR ZUNI BLUEHEAD SUCKER

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is publishing the Notice of Availability of the draft economic analysis and draft environmental assessment for the proposed critical habitat for the Zuni bluehead sucker. The Service also announces a revision of the proposed critical habitat designation. Publication of the Notice of Availability will begin a 30-day comment period.

On January 25, 2013, the Service concurrently published a proposed rule to list the Zuni bluehead sucker as endangered and to designate approximately 291 miles in three units in McKinley, Cibola, and San Juan Counties, New Mexico, and Apache County, Arizona as critical habitat. On July 24, 2014, we published a final listing determination for the Zuni bluehead sucker. Based on new genetic information, that final listing rule revised the range of the species from the time of the proposal such that the San Juan River Unit populations were no longer included as part of the listed species. As a result, the areas have also been removed from the proposed critical habitat designation, reducing the total amount of proposed critical habitat for the Zuni bluehead sucker from approximately 291 miles to 141 miles.

When specifying an area as critical habitat, the Endangered Species Act (Act) requires the Service to consider economic and other relevant impacts of the designation. If the benefits of excluding an area outweigh the benefits of designating it, the Secretary may exclude an area from critical habitat, unless doing so would jeopardize the existence of a threatened or endangered species.

The draft economic analysis provides estimated costs of the foreseeable potential economic impacts resulting from the proposed critical habitat designation. The draft economic analysis for concludes that the economic impacts of the critical habitat designation are limited to administrative and conservation efforts associated with a small number of section 7 consultations under the Act. The incremental costs are anticipated to be relatively low given that the proposed critical habitat is occupied by the species, the proposed critical habitat units are in remote areas and few actions being carried out in the area are subject to a Federal nexus. The total present value impacts anticipated from the designation of critical habitat for the Zuni bluehead sucker is likely to be less than \$10,000 per consultation.

The Service will accept public comments received or postmarked on or before May 14, 2015. For more information on this proposal, what to comment on, or how to submit comments, see the *Federal Register* notice on our web site at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest>.

America's fish, wildlife and plant resources belong to all of us, and ensuring the health of imperiled species is a shared responsibility. We're working to actively engage conservation partners and the public in the search for improved and innovative ways to conserve and recover imperiled species. To learn more about the Endangered Species program, go to <http://www.fws.gov/endangered/>.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service works with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. For more information, visit www.fws.gov, or connect with us through any of these social media channels:



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