

COLORADO PIKEMINNOW
(Ptychocheilus lucius)

STATUS: Endangered (32 FR 4001, March 11, 1967) with critical habitat (59 FR 13374, March 21, 1994). No critical habitat has been designated within Arizona. Experimental nonessential populations in Salt and Verde rivers (50 FR 30194; July 24, 1985).

SPECIES DESCRIPTION: The largest American minnow [up to 1.8 m (6 ft) long and 36 kg (80 lbs)]. Dusky-green in color and slender bodied with gold flecks on the dorsal surface. Head is long and slender with a large mouth.

HABITAT: Rivers with high silt content, warm water, turbulence, and variable flow by season under 1,219 m (4,000 ft) in elevation. Adults are migratory and inhabit pools and eddies just outside of the main current, while young are found in backwater areas.

RANGE: Historical: Endemic to the Colorado River and its major tributaries in Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, Colorado, and Wyoming.

Current: Extirpated from the Gila River and Colorado River south of Lake Powell. The last known naturally occurring specimen from Arizona was collected in 1969. Small populations exist in the Colorado, Green, Yampa, San Juan, and Gunnison rivers in Utah and Colorado. Experimental nonessential populations have been reintroduced into the Verde and Salt rivers in Yavapai and Gila counties, Arizona.

REASONS FOR DECLINE/VULNERABILITY: Alteration of river conditions and loss of habitat caused by dam construction, irrigation dewatering, and channelization; and the introduction of exotic competitive and predatory fish species.

LAND MANAGEMENT/OWNERSHIP: In Arizona: U.S. Forest Service, the State of Arizona, Tribal lands, and private.

NOTES: Formerly known as “Colorado Squawfish.” A Recovery Plan was approved in March 1978 and revised in August 1991. The recovery plan was updated in 2002.

Populations are maintained at Dexter National Fish Hatchery and by the Arizona Game and Fish Department at Bubbling Springs State Fish Hatchery.

Listed as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need by the State of Arizona.