



News Release

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Service Seeks Comments on Proposals to List the Sharpnose Shiner and the Smalleye Shiner and Designate Critical Habitat *Seeking information to inform final decision*

Based on evidence that the sharpnose shiner and the smalleye shiner and their habitats are in decline, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) announced today that it is proposing to list the two shiner species as endangered species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The Service is also proposing to designate critical habitat in 11 Texas counties.

Members of the public and scientific community are encouraged to review and comment on the proposals during the 60-day public comment period. The Service will hold a public informational meeting followed by a public hearing on Wednesday, September 4, 2013, at the Abilene Civic Center, Upstairs Conference Room, 1100 North 6th Street, Abilene, TX 79601. The informational meeting will be held from 5:00 - 6:00 p.m. followed by a break, and the public hearing will be held from 6:30 – 8:00 p.m. The Service will make a final listing determination based on the best available science.

The sharpnose and smalleye shiners are small minnows native to arid prairie streams of Texas. Once found throughout the Brazos River and several of its major tributaries within the watershed, the two species are currently restricted almost entirely to the contiguous river segments of the upper Brazos River basin in north-central Texas. This represents a reduction from the sharpnose and smalleye shiners' historical ranges of more than 50 and 70 percent, respectively.

The maximum lifespan of these species is approximately three years, although many shiners live through only one breeding season. The sharpnose and smalleye shiners both require wide, shallow, unobstructed flowing waters to survive, grow and reproduce. The Service first identified both species as candidates for ESA protection in June 2002.

The Service is proposing to designate a total of approximately 623 miles (1,002 river kilometers) of the upper Brazos River basin, including the riparian areas extending beyond the river channel by 30 meters on each side as critical habitat in the following Texas counties: Baylor, Crosby, Fisher, Garza, Haskell, Kent, King, Knox, Stonewall, Throckmorton and Young. We are not currently proposing to designate any areas outside the geographical area occupied by the species.

Today's proposal is part of the Service's efforts to implement a court-approved work plan that resolves a series of lawsuits concerning the agency's ESA Listing Program. The intent of the agreement is to significantly reduce litigation-driven workloads and allow the agency to focus its resources on the species most in need of the ESA's protections.

The Service is requesting comments or information from the public, governmental agencies, the scientific community, industry, or any other interested parties concerning this proposed rule. Comments must be received within 60 days.

Written comments and information concerning the proposed listing and critical habitat proposals will be accepted until October 7, 2013, and may be submitted by one of the following methods:

- Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>, Submit comments on the listing proposal to Docket No. FWS-R2-ES-2013-0083, and submit comments on the critical habitat proposal to Docket No. FWS-R2-ES-2013-0008.; or
- By hard copy: U.S. mail or hand-delivery: Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS-R2-ES-2013-0083; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, MS 2042-PDM; Arlington, VA 22203. Submit comments on the critical habitat proposal by U.S. mail or hand-delivery to: Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS-R2-ES-2013-0008; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, MS 2042-PDM; Arlington, VA 22203.

More information is available online at

<http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/ArlingtonTexas/Shiner.htm> or by contacting Erik Orsak, Acting Field Supervisor, Arlington Ecological Services Field Office, 2005 Northeast Green Oaks Blvd, Suite 140, Arlington, TX, 76006; telephone 817-277-1100. Persons who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 800-877-8339.

America's fish, wildlife and plant resources belong to all of us, and ensuring the health of imperiled species is a shared responsibility. The Service is actively engaged with 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/angered/>.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov. Connect with our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/usfws, follow our tweets at www.twitter.com/usfws, watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfws>.

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