



News Release

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Fish and Wildlife Service Finds Prairie Chub May Need ESA Protection

-Further study needed-

The prairie chub (*Macrhybopsis australis*) may warrant federal protection as a threatened or endangered species, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) announced today, following an initial review of a petition seeking to protect the prairie chub under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

The Service will undertake a more thorough status review of the species to determine whether to propose adding the species to the Federal list of endangered and threatened wildlife and plants.

To ensure this status review is comprehensive, the Service is soliciting information from State and Federal natural resource agencies and all interested parties regarding the prairie chub and its habitat. Therefore, the Service is initiating a 60-day public comment period. Comments should be received by the Oklahoma Ecological Services Field Office no later than COB June 13, 2011.

Based on the status review, the Service will make one of three possible determinations:

- 1) Protection under the ESA is not warranted, in which case no further action will be taken.
- 2) Protection under the ESA as threatened or endangered is warranted. In this case, the Service will publish a proposal to add the species to the list of threatened and endangered species, solicit independent scientific peer review of the proposal, seek input from the public, and consider the input before a final decision about listing the species is made. In general, there is a 1 year period between the time a species is proposed and the final decision.
- 3) Protection under the ESA is warranted but precluded by other, higher priority activities. This means the species is added to the Federal list of candidate species, and the proposal to list is deferred while the Service works on listing proposals for other species that are at greater risk. A warranted but precluded finding requires subsequent annual reviews of the finding until such time as either a listing proposal is published, or a not warranted finding is made based on new information.

The prairie chub is found in the upper Red River basin in Oklahoma and Texas, and is presumed extirpated in the Washita River and North Fork of the Red River. This small fish is known to occupy relatively large, shallow streams and typically uses clean sand or gravel substrates. Reproductive success of the prairie chub may be related to stream discharge during the spring and summer.

For further information regarding this finding, and on how and where to comment, see the Federal Register notice. This will be posted on our web site at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest>. You can also contact Dixie Bounds, Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Oklahoma Ecological Services Field Office, 9014 East 21st Street, Tulsa, OK 74129, by telephone at 918-581-7458, or by facsimile at 918-581-7467. If you use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD), please call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 800-877-8339.

The Endangered Species Act provides a critical safety net for America's native fish, wildlife and plants. This landmark conservation law has prevented the extinction of hundreds of imperiled species across the nation and promoted the recovery of many others.

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. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service works cooperatively with the American public to continue the conservation legacy of America's great outdoors. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov.

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