

Frequently Asked Questions

Final Listing for the Zuni Bluehead Sucker as an Endangered Species

Q What action is the Service taking?

A The Service announced the final listing rule for the Zuni bluehead sucker (*Catostomus discobolus yarrowi*) as an endangered species under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA), throughout its range in New Mexico and Arizona. This rule becomes effective August 25, 2014.

Q Why is the Service taking this action?

A The Service's determination that the Zuni bluehead sucker warrants listing as an endangered species is based on the combined effects of the following factors: habitat destruction, modification, and degradation resulting from water withdrawal (stream drying); sedimentation; impoundments; livestock grazing; the spread of non-native species; and predation by non-native species such as the green sunfish, northern crayfish, and red swamp crayfish, which limit recruitment and reduce population size. In addition, small population size and restricted ranges of the species make the Zuni bluehead sucker population vulnerable to stochastic events, such as wildfire and drought.

Q Why is the Service making this determination now?

A To meet our statutory deadlines outlined in the ESA and to comply with the provisions of the multi-district litigation (MDL) agreement and the Act, the Service must publish in the *Federal Register* a final listing determination for the Zuni bluehead sucker (*Catostomus discobolus yarrowi*) by July 25, 2014. We proposed critical habitat on January 25, 2013; the final critical habitat rule for this species will be published at a later date.

Q Has this final rule been delayed, and if so why?

A On January 25, 2013, the Service published a proposed rule in the *Federal Register* to list the Zuni bluehead sucker as an endangered species under the ESA. The proposed listing rule had a 60-day comment period, ending March 26, 2013. After the publication of the proposed rule, the Service found there was substantial scientific disagreement about the taxonomic status of some populations identified as the Zuni bluehead sucker in the proposed rule. Therefore, on January 9, 2014, we reopened the comment period for the proposed listing rule and extended the schedule for the final determination for 6 months in order to solicit and analyze information that would help to clarify the issues. That comment period closed on February 10, 2014.

Q Where is the Zuni bluehead sucker found?

A The Zuni bluehead sucker is endemic to the headwaters of the Little Colorado River and the Zuni River watersheds in east-central Arizona and west-central New Mexico. The subspecies inhabits stream reaches with clean, perennial water flows, and it has been found in McKinley and Cibola Counties, New Mexico, and Apache County in eastern Arizona. The Zuni bluehead sucker is typically found in water that is 12 to 20 inches deep, with cobble, boulders, and bedrock substrate.

Q What is a Zuni bluehead sucker and what does it look like?

A The Zuni bluehead sucker has a torpedo-shaped, slender body, a bluish head with a mouth below and slightly behind the tip of the snout, a silvery-tan to dark green back, and yellowish to silvery-white sides and abdomen. Adults are mottled slate-gray to almost black on the upper part of the body and cream-white underneath toward the abdomen. Most individuals do not exceed 8 inches in total length. Zuni bluehead suckers feed primarily on algae scraped from rocks, rubble, and gravel substrates.