



# News Release

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## **Zuni Bluehead Sucker Warrants Protection Under the Endangered Species Act**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today announced the final listing of the Zuni bluehead sucker (*Catostomus discobolus yarrowi*) as an endangered species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The Zuni bluehead sucker – a small, slender, torpedo-shaped fish – is endemic to the headwaters of the Little Colorado River and the Zuni River watersheds in east-central Arizona and west-central New Mexico. This final listing rule will become effective August 25, 2014.

The Zuni bluehead sucker is in decline due to the combined effects of the following factors: habitat destruction, modification, and degradation resulting from water withdrawal (stream drying); sedimentation; impoundments; livestock grazing; spread of non-native species; predation by non-native species such as the green sunfish, northern crayfish, and red swamp crayfish. 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.

On January 25, 2013, the Service published in the *Federal Register* a proposed rule to list the Zuni bluehead sucker as an endangered species under the ESA. After publication of the proposed rule, the Service found there was substantial scientific disagreement about the taxonomic status of some populations of the Zuni bluehead sucker. Therefore, the Service reopened the comment period on January 12, 2014 for 30 days for the proposed listing rule and extended the timeline for the final determination for 6 months to solicit and analyze information that would help clarify the issues.

The subspecies has been found in McKinley and Cibola Counties in New Mexico, and Apache County in eastern Arizona, typically in water 12 to 20 inches deep, with cobble, boulders and

bedrock substrate. Zuni bluehead suckers feed primarily on algae scraped from cobble and gravel substrates.

The Zuni bluehead sucker has a bluish head with a mouth below and slightly behind the tip of the snout, a silvery-tan to dark green back, and yellow to silver-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.

The Service carefully considered all comments received from peer reviewers, tribes, state and federal agencies, and the public regarding the proposed rule to list the Zuni bluehead sucker. The final listing determination reflects the use of the best available science.

Copies of the final rule may be found at the Service's website at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest>. The Service plans to publish the final designation of critical habitat at a later date.

*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](http://www.fws.gov), or connect with us through any of these social media channels:*



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