



News Release

Public Affairs Office
PO Box 1306
Albuquerque, NM 87103
505/248-6911
505/248-6915 (Fax)

For Release: October 6, 2020

Contacts: Lesli Gray, 972-439-4542, lesli_gray@fws.gov
Aubry Buzek, 512-962-0289, aubry_buzek@fws.gov

Brazos River Authority Submits Draft Conservation Agreement to Conserve Two Central Texas Mussels

Meandering through Texas from the dry northwestern plains to the southern Gulf coast, the Brazos River is the third-longest river in Texas. It is home to a diverse assortment of aquatic fauna including two freshwater mussels, the Texas fawnsfoot and the false spike. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is announcing the availability of the Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCA) for the two mussel species and a draft National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) screening form in support of a Categorical Exclusion. The Brazos River Authority submitted the application for an “enhancement of survival permit” under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) that includes the CCA. A 30-day public comment period will begin on October 6, 2020.

“We are excited that the Brazos River Authority has stepped forward and submitted the first CCA for central Texas mussels,” said Regional Director Amy Lueders. “We appreciate the Authority’s efforts to conserve the Texas fawnsfoot and false spike while ensuring certainty for water users and communities dependent upon the Brazos River.”

Established almost a century ago, the Brazos River Authority is responsible for developing and managing the water resources of the Brazos River Basin. If approved the CCA and enhancement of survival permit would implement a voluntary conservation strategy for freshwater mussels developed by the Authority and informed by the National Freshwater Mollusk Conservation Society’s National Strategy for the Conservation of Native Freshwater Mussels. The strategy includes measures to minimize and avoid direct and indirect impacts to freshwater mussels and their habitats; flow standards; public outreach and education; adaptive management; and other conservation actions. Implementation of the conservation strategy and its conservation measures are expected to help increase the species populations and improve their habitat over the 20-year term of the agreement.

CCAs are voluntary and provide private landowners and other non-federal landowner entities the opportunity to implement conservation practices that address specific threats with assurances that, if the species were to be listed, they can continue to manage their land and waters as outlined in their agreements with no additional requirements. CCAs are intended to reduce or remove identified

threats to a species and while they do not guarantee that a species will not be listed, they do provide regulatory assurances to participants in the event of a listing.

The Texas fawnsfoot occurs in the Brazos, Colorado and Trinity River basins, Texas. In the Brazos basin, Texas fawnsfoot occurs in the Brazos, Navasota, San Gabriel, and Little rivers, the Clear Fork of the Brazos River, and Brushy Creek. Texas fawnsfoot are threatened by water quality decline, changes in river flows, and small population sizes. The false spike was once thought to be extinct but was rediscovered in 2011. It occurs in portions of the Brazos, Colorado, and Guadalupe River basins, Texas. In the Brazos basin, false spike occurs in the San Gabriel and Little rivers, and Brushy Creek. All populations of this species are small and isolated, and most populations are subject to declining flows.

The Service encourages the public to review and provide comments on the documents during the 30-day public comment period. Written comments must be received by November 5, 2020. Information on how to obtain or review copies of these documents, or how to provide comments can be found [here](#).

The Service is working with states, private landowners, federal agencies, industry and businesses and other partners—like the Authority—to give at-risk fish, wildlife and plant species a chance to recover before they face an Endangered Species Act listing, or worse, extinction. In the last 10 years, nearly 45 species were precluded from being listed, were downlisted, or were delisted completely in part due to the proactive conservation efforts of partners in Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico and Arizona.

The Service's priority is to make implementation of the ESA less complex, less contentious and more effective. We seek to accelerate recovery of threatened and endangered species across the nation, while making it easier for people to coexist with these species. We work with to proactively conserve habitats for declining species through voluntary tools like CCAAs and the Partners for Fish and Wildlife program. To learn more about the Endangered Species Program, visit <http://www.fws.gov/endangered/>.

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 on our work and the people who make it happen, visit <http://www.fws.gov/>. Connect with our [Facebook page](#), follow our [tweets](#), watch our [YouTube Channel](#) and download photos from our [Flickr page](#).

-FWS-

<http://www.fws.gov/southwest>