



October 5, 2017

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SAN FELIPE GAMBUSIA WILL NOT RECEIVE ESA PROTECTION *Species Determined Not To Be A Distinct Species*

Additional scientific research has determined that the San Felipe gambusia, a small fish, is not a distinct species. Therefore it is not eligible for protection under the Endangered Species Act (Act). Today's decision, also known as a 12-month finding, follows an in-depth status review of a 2007 petition to list 475 species in the southwestern United States including the San Felipe gambusia under the Act.

The San Felipe gambusia was discovered in 1997 and described by Dr. Gary Garrett and Dr. Robert Edwards as a species distinct from other gambusia species including its closest believed relative, the spotfin gambusia. The distinction between the San Felipe gambusia and spotfin gambusia was based on the shape and structure of specific physical (morphological) characteristics, primarily body coloring and aspects of the male anal fin used for reproduction (gonopodium). Drs. Garrett and Edwards published their results in 2003 identifying the San Felipe gambusia as a new species only known to occur in San Felipe Creek in Val Verde County, Texas.

In 2013, however, Dr. Anthony Echelle, with Drs. Garrett and Edwards as coauthors, published a paper reporting the results of a genetics, taxonomy, and morphology study of three closely related gambusia species, which included the San Felipe gambusia and the spotfin gambusia. The study concluded that the San Felipe gambusia is, in fact, the same species (a junior synonym) as the more widespread spotfin gambusia, and therefore is not a distinct species.

Additional information on the finding is available at the Service's Austin Ecological Services Office web site, <https://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/AustinTexas/>.

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