



Questions and Answers

Draft Devils River Minnow Recovery Plan

September 2005

Why is the Devils River minnow listed as a threatened species?

Devils River minnow (*Dionda diaboli*) was federally listed as a threatened species in 1999. The historic range of the species included Rio Grande tributary streams in Val Verde and Kinney counties, Texas, and northern Mexico. However, the fish has been eliminated or dramatically reduced throughout much of its range. The primary threats to the species include habitat loss and degradation (water quantity and quality) and impacts from non-native species.

What does “recovery” mean?

Recovery is the process by which the decline of an endangered or threatened species is arrested and reversed, and threats removed or reduced so that the species' survival in the wild can be ensured. The goal is to recover listed species to the point where protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) is no longer needed. The collaborative efforts of many partners (Federal, state, and local agencies, conservation organizations, the business community, private landowners, and other concerned citizens) with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) are critical to the recovery of listed species. The Service currently works closely with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), The Nature Conservancy, the City of Del Rio, private landowners, and others for the conservation of Devils River minnow.

What are recovery plans?

Recovery plans are non-regulatory guidance documents that detail the specific tasks needed to recover threatened or endangered species. They can provide an adaptive management strategy for private, Federal, and state cooperation in the conservation of listed species. Recovery plans identify a wide range of actions available that when implemented will help recover the species. These may include reintroduction of species into formerly occupied habitat, land acquisition and management, landowner agreements that preserve or enhance habitat, captive breeding, habitat restoration and protection, population assessments, research, technical assistance for private landowners, and public education programs. Plans set criteria for when populations are viable and "self-sustaining" and can be deemed recovered. It is important that both the plan and its implementation adapt to new information and/or conditions. The Draft Devils River Minnow Recovery Plan was prepared by the Service, TPWD and the Rio Grande Fishes Recovery Team, with cooperation from the Devils River Minnow Conservation Team, and other interested parties.

What is the Rio Grande Fishes Recovery Team (Recovery Team)?

The Recovery Team is made up of seven biologists from the southwestern U.S. and northern Mexico. They were appointed by the Service's Regional Director and serve on a volunteer basis to provide expert advice on planning and carrying out recovery actions. Their primary responsibility is to develop recovery plans for six listed fishes in the Rio Grande Basin of Texas and New Mexico.

What is the Devils River Minnow Conservation Team (Conservation Team)?

The Conservation Team was formed from the Devils River Minnow Conservation Agreement, signed in 1998 by the Service, TPWD, and the City of Del Rio. TPWD chairs the Conservation Team, with the Service, City of Del Rio, and private landowners participating as team members to administer activities described in the Conservation Agreement.

What is needed to recover the Devils River minnow?

The recovery plan describes the goals, objectives, criteria, strategies, and specific tasks necessary for achieving recovery of the Devils River minnow. The goal is to improve the status of the species so that it may be removed from the list of species protected under the ESA. Generally, the Devils River Minnow Recovery Plan describes the needs for conservation of the existing habitat (including conserving groundwater aquifers and surface water flows and preventing local pollution), control of non-native species, and possibly restoring an additional population within the historic range. A critical element is the conservation of groundwater resources to allow for maintenance of spring flows because the loss of surface water flowing from springs is the most serious long-term threat to the minnow.

How do recovery plans get implemented?

While recovery planning details specific objectives and actions needed to recover species, recovery implementation involves voluntary on-the-ground actions by a host of interested parties. The Devils River minnow occurs in streams flowing mostly through private lands, therefore, its recovery will depend on cooperative conservation efforts with a variety of different groups. Some examples of available recovery tools from the Fish and Wildlife Service include:

Safe Harbor Agreements for private landowners (see <http://endangered.fws.gov/landowner/index.html>)

Grants to states, territories and private landowners (see <http://endangered.fws.gov/grants/index.html>)

Reintroducing species back into their historic range (see <http://endangered.fws.gov/recovery/index.html>)

Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program (see <http://partners.fws.gov/>)

How can others participate in recovery planning?

The Service is committed to involving stakeholders—local jurisdictions, private organizations, landowners, and other interested parties—in recovery programs. This approach not only makes recovery a more achievable goal, but also gives stakeholders a voice in recovery plan development and implementation. The Devils River Minnow Recovery Plan underwent public comment and peer review between February 23 and April 11, 2005. The Recovery Plan became final when it was signed by the Service's Southwest Regional Director, Mr. Dale Hall, with concurrence from Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Executive Director, Mr. Robert Cook.

The Recovery Plan for Devils River minnow is available for download on the Internet at: <http://www.fws.gov/endangered/recovery/> and <http://ifw2es.fws.gov/AustinTexas/>.

Contacts for more information:

Nathan Allan
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Austin Ecological Services Field Office
10711 Burnet Road, Suite 200
Austin, Texas 78758
phone / fax: 512-490-0057 / 490-0974
email: nathan_allan@fws.gov

Dr. Gary Garrett
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
Heart of the Hills Fisheries Science Center
HC 7, Box 62
Ingram, Texas 78025
phone / fax: 830-866-3356 / 866-3549
email: gary.garrett@tpwd.state.tx.us