



# News Release

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**Southwest Region (Arizona • New Mexico • Oklahoma • Texas)** [www.fws.gov/southwest/](http://www.fws.gov/southwest/)

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## **Service Proposes to List the Headwater Chub and Roundtail Chub as Threatened Under the Endangered Species Act**

*Federal and state agencies are working together to address threats to imperiled fish and desert headwater streams*

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is proposing to list two minnows, the headwater chub and a distinct population segment (DPS) of the roundtail chub in the Lower Colorado River Basin (Arizona and New Mexico), as threatened species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

The Service's species status assessment (SSA) documents the results of a comprehensive review for both the headwater chub and roundtail chub DPS to inform the proposed listing decision under the ESA and to inform future conservation efforts. The SSA thoroughly describes the viability of the headwater and roundtail chubs based on the best scientific and commercial data available. Results from the review indicate the headwater chub and the Lower Colorado River Basin DPS of the roundtail chub could be in danger of extinction in the foreseeable future and meet the definition of a threatened species under the ESA.

Threats to these species are primarily predation by non-native fishes and habitat destruction due to dewatering, impoundment construction and channelization, as well as the effects of mining, livestock overgrazing, roads, water pollution, urban and suburban development, groundwater pumping and climate change.

“Water is obviously a scarce resource in the desert southwest, and virtually all climate models predict hotter and drier times ahead,” said Steve Spangle, Field Supervisor for the Service’s Ecological Services Office in Arizona. “When you add these stressors and non-native predators to the equation, the outlook isn’t good for many native fish. But it’s our hope we can work closely with partner agencies such as the Arizona Game and Fish Department to prevent further declines and eventually recover these species.”

The Southwest’s unique headwater streams and the native fish they support are a source of local identity and a critical component of the region’s economy. They provide sustainable water for desert communities, agriculture and businesses, as well as for recreational fishing. To protect these important resources and the imperiled chubs, the Service has been working closely with Arizona Game and Fish Department, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish to prevent further declines of these species.

The headwater chub (*Gila nigra*) grows to about eight inches in length, is dark gray to brown with silvery sides, and lives in the upper and middle reaches of moderately sized streams. Headwater chub historically occur in a number of tributaries of the Verde River, most of the Tonto Creek drainage, much of the San Carlos River drainage, and parts of the upper Gila River in New Mexico. Today, they occur in the same drainages, but have a smaller distribution.

The nine- to 14-inch roundtail chub (*Gila robusta*, also known as the Verde trout) is an olive-gray to silver minnow with a lighter belly. The species was historically considered common in deep pools and eddies of large streams throughout its range in the Upper and Lower Colorado River basins in Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona. Today the roundtail chub occupies about 52<sup>1</sup> percent of its historical range in the Lower Colorado River Basin and is limited to Arizona's Little Colorado, Bill Williams, Salt, San Carlos and Verde River drainages, Eagle and Aravaipa creeks, and New Mexico's upper Gila River.

Members of the public, agencies, and the scientific community are encouraged to review and comment on the proposed rule during the 60-day public comment period. We are seeking comments regarding the potential critical habitat designation for these species. We are also requesting information as to which prohibitions and exceptions to those prohibitions, are necessary and advisable for the conservation of the headwater chub and the Lower Colorado River Basin DPS of the roundtail chub.

The Service is also working with partners to create a special rule under section 4(d) of the ESA that would tailor prohibitions of the Act to those that are necessary and advisable for the conservation of the species. The rule would cover roundtail chub that reside in agricultural and urban canals or fishable waters, and would exempt operational and maintenance activities on state, private and tribal lands and waterways (including canals, stock tanks, etc.) from the requirement to obtain a permit in cases where an otherwise lawful activity incidentally harasses, harms, or kills one of the fish.

Written comments and information concerning the proposed listing will be accepted until December 7, 2015. Comments and/or information may be submitted by one of the following methods:

- Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>, Submit comments on the listing proposal to Docket No. FWS-R2-ES-2015-0148; or
- By hard copy: U.S. mail or hand-delivery:  
Division of Policy, Performance, and Management Programs; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 5275 Leesburg Pike MS: BPHC, Falls Church, VA 22041-3803

More information on this proposed action and how to provide comments is available online at: [www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona](http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona)

You may also contact Steve Spangle, Field Supervisor, Arizona Ecological Services Field Office, 2321 West Royal Palm Road, Suite 103, Phoenix, AZ 85021; telephone 602-242-0210. Persons who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 800-877-8339.

*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:*



<sup>1</sup> This number was incorrectly reported in the news release initially issued 10/5/2015

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

NOTE TO EDITORS: Photographs of the Headwater or roundtail chub are available by contacting Jeff Humphrey (602-242-0210 or [jeff\\_humphrey@fws.gov](mailto:jeff_humphrey@fws.gov)) or on our website at **[www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/](http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/)**