



## Questions and Answers: 2009 Roundtail Chub Status Assessment

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Arizona Ecological Services Field Office

[www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/](http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/)

**Q: What is the roundtail chub and where is it found?**

**A:** The 9- to 14-inch roundtail chub (*Gila robusta*) 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. The petition singles out the lower basin – Arizona and New Mexico – population for protection. This population today occupies about 18 percent of its historical range 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.

**Q: What is a status review and 12-month finding?**

**A:** Under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), citizens or groups can petition the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service to consider adding a species to the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Species. The ESA requires that, for any petition to revise the List of Threatened and Endangered Species that contains substantial scientific and commercial information that listing may be warranted, the Services must make a finding within 12 months of the date of receipt of the petition on whether the petitioned action is (a) not warranted, (b) warranted, or (c) warranted but that the immediate proposal of a regulation implementing the petitioned action is precluded by other pending proposals to determine whether any species is threatened or endangered. A status review includes requesting and gathering the best available scientific and commercial information relevant to a species and threats to it, and evaluation of all available information. This becomes the basis of the 12-month finding.

**Q: Only a portion of the roundtail chub’s range was petitioned for listing; under what authority is this permitted and how is it being evaluated?**

**A:** In the petition to list these species, the petitioners asked the Service to consider designating a Distinct Vertebrate Population Segment for the roundtail chub in the lower Colorado River basin. Under the ESA, the Service must consider listing any species, subspecies, or, for vertebrates, DPSs of these taxa, if warranted. To implement the measures prescribed by the ESA and its Congressional guidance, the Services (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service) developed a DPS policy to clarify interpretation of the phrase “distinct population segment of any species of vertebrate fish or wildlife” for the purposes of listing, delisting, and reclassifying species under the ESA. Under the DPS policy, three elements are considered in a decision regarding the status of a possible DPS as endangered or threatened. The elements are: (1) the population segment’s discreteness from the remainder of the taxon to which it belongs; (2) the population segment’s significance to the taxon to which it belongs; and (3) the population segment’s conservation status in relation to the ESA’s standards for listing (i.e., when treated as if it were a species, is the population segment endangered or threatened?).

The lower Colorado River populations of the roundtail chub will be evaluated to determine whether they meet the definition of a DPS, addressing discreteness and significance as required by the DPS policy to determine whether it is discernible from the upper basin population and whether it warrants protection under the Services’ Distinct Population Segment Policy.

**Q: Didn’t the Service previously conduct a status review and 12-month finding for the roundtail and headwater chubs? If so, why is the roundtail chub status review being done again?**

**A:** Yes. In 2006, after review of all available scientific and commercial information, the Service found that the roundtail chub in the lower Colorado River basin is not discernible from the upper basin population and therefore did not qualify as a Distinct Population Segment (DPS) under the Endangered Species Act and Distinct Population Segment Policy. The Service did find that listing the headwater chub, a related species, was warranted but precluded by higher priority listing actions. We are redoing the roundtail chub 12-month finding because, after receiving a complaint from the Center for Biological Diversity challenging our decision to not list the lower Colorado River basin population of the roundtail chub as an endangered or threatened species, we entered into a stipulated settlement agreement to commence a new status review of the lower Colorado basin population of the roundtail chub by October 1, 2008, and to submit a 12-month finding to the Federal Register by June 30, 2009.

**Q: What threatens roundtail chub?**

**A:** Roundtail chub experience threats primarily from predation and competition with nonnative fishes, and also habitat destruction due to dewatering, impoundment, channelization, and channel changes caused by alteration of riparian vegetation and watershed degradation.

**Q: Are there efforts to conserve the roundtail chub?**

**A:** The State of New Mexico lists the roundtail chub and headwater chub as endangered under its Wildlife Conservation Act. Unlike the federal Act, however, habitat is not protected under New Mexico's law. The Utah Department of Natural Resources has drafted a document entitled "Range-wide Conservation Agreement and Strategy for Roundtail Chub (*Gila robusta*), Bluehead Sucker (*Catostomus discobolus*), and Flannelmouth Sucker (*Catostomus latipinnis*)." The document was finalized and signed by all the Colorado River basin states in 2004. The Agreement and Strategy relies upon individual state plans to conserve the species. Recently, New Mexico has completed a recovery plan for the roundtail chub and headwater chub. These efforts fulfill New Mexico's obligation under the State of Utah-led conservation effort described above.

The Arizona Game and Fish Department has developed an agreement and strategy for several native fish species, including the roundtail chub and headwater chub; this document was completed in December 2006 and has broad support from a number of state and federal cooperators. The Service evaluates such efforts under its Policy for Evaluation of Conservation Efforts when Making Listing Decisions. The Service is working with both states to ensure that these efforts will be as effective as possible.

**Q: How do I submit information for the status review?**

**A:** Information regarding the status of, and any potential threat to, the roundtail chub may be submitted by one of the following methods:

- Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the instructions for submitting comments.
- U.S. mail or hand-delivery: Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS-R2-ES-2009-0004; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 222; Arlington, VA 22203.

To allow adequate time to conduct this review, information should be submitted on or before April 2, 2009. Previously submitted roundtail chub information need not be resubmitted. For further information, contact Steve Spangle, Field Supervisor, Arizona Ecological Services Office, 2321 West Royal Palm Road, Suite 103, Phoenix, AZ 85021-4951; telephone 602-242-0210.