



News Release

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

Southwest Region (Arizona • New Mexico • Oklahoma • Texas) www.fws.gov/southwest/

For Release: January 8, 2014

Contacts: Tom Buckley, (505) 248-6455, tom_buckley@fws.gov

Service Announces a 6-Month Extension of the Proposal to List the Zuni Bluehead Sucker as an Endangered Species

In order to conserve the Zuni bluehead sucker (*Catostomus discobolus yarrowi*), whose distribution rangewide has been reduced dramatically in the last 20 years, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) proposed to list the Zuni bluehead sucker as an endangered species under the Endangered Species Act on January 25, 2013. Now the Service is extending the deadline for a final decision concerning the listing of the Zuni bluehead sucker because there is substantial disagreement regarding the sufficiency or accuracy of the data the Service has available to make the decision. Therefore, the Service is reopening the comment period for 30 days to solicit additional information.

The Zuni bluehead sucker, a candidate for listing since 2001, has been found in San Juan, McKinley, and Cibola counties in New Mexico; and Apache county in eastern Arizona inhabiting stream reaches with clean, perennial water flows. Identified threats to the Zuni bluehead sucker included water withdrawals, sedimentation, impoundments, housing development, and predation by nonnative green sunfish (*Lepomis cyanellus*). The Service believes its range has already been reduced by approximately 90 percent in New Mexico, but is not sure of the extent of range reduction in Arizona. Low water levels from drought and water withdrawals in remaining occupied streams have reduced the available habitat for the subspecies.

Comments may be submitted by one of the following methods:

(1) *Electronically:* Go to the Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>. In the Search box, enter FWS–R2–ES–2012–0101, which is the docket number for the proposed rule to list the Zuni bluehead sucker as endangered. Then, in the Search panel on the left side of the screen, under the Document Type heading, check on the Proposed Rules link to located the proposed rule. You may submit a comment by clicking on “Comment Now!”

(2) *By hard copy:* Submit by U.S. mail or hand-delivery to: Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS–R2–ES–2012–0101; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, MS 2042–PDM; Arlington, VA 22203. You are requested to send comments **only** by the methods described above. We will post all comments on <http://www.regulations.gov>. The comment period will end COB February 10, 2014.

The Zuni bluehead sucker has a torpedo-shaped, slender body with a mouth below and slightly behind the tip of the snout. Most individuals do not exceed 8 inches in total length. The Zuni bluehead sucker has a bluish head, silvery-tan to dark green back, and yellowish to silvery-white sides and abdomen. Adults are mottled slate-gray to almost black on the upper part of the body and cream-white underneath toward the abdomen. Most specimens were found in water that was 12 to 20 inches deep, with cobble, boulders, and bedrock substrate. Zuni bluehead suckers feed primarily on algae scraped from rocks, rubble, and gravel substrates.

The health of threatened and endangered species is strongly linked to our own well-being. Millions of Americans depend on habitat that sustains these species – for clean air and water, recreational opportunities and for their livelihoods.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov. Connect with our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/usfws, follow our tweets at www.twitter.com/usfwshq, watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwshq>.

-FWS-

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