

Finding of No Significant Impact

Designation of Critical Habitat for the Spikedace and Loach Minnow

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is designating critical habitat for the spikedace (*Meda fulgida*) and the loach minnow (*Tiaroga = (Rhinichthys) cobitis*) pursuant to section 4 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended. The designation encompasses approximately 1448 km (898 mi) of the streams within the Gila River basin, including the 100-year flood plain in Apache, Cochise, Gila, Graham, Greenlee, Navajo, Pima, Pinal, and Yavapai counties, Arizona; and Catron, Grant, and Hidalgo counties, New Mexico. The designated critical habitat includes both Federal and non-Federal lands in the aforementioned counties. Tribal lands are excluded from the designation.

We have analyzed four alternatives to the agency action, including: No Action, Designation Identical to the 1994 Final Rules, Designation of the Entire Historical Ranges, and Designation of Only the Occupied Portions of the Historical Range. Two additional alternatives were considered, then rejected. The Service has developed an Environmental Assessment for the Designation of Critical Habitat for the Spikedace and Loach Minnow which analyzes each of these alternatives and the action alternative.

Implementation of our decision is expected to have only minor, unquantifiable effects on Federal actions beyond the listing of the spikedace and loach minnow in areas designated as critical habitat but presently unoccupied by the fishes. Thus, the designation of critical habitat will have no discernible impacts to the environment, water management actions, agricultural and grazing activities, or to the social infrastructure and economy of the project area. The designation is not expected to have any significant adverse effects on wetlands and floodplains, or to the human environment.

The designation has been coordinated with all interested and/or affected parties. Parties contacted include the Bureau of Reclamation, Bureau of Land Management, Corps of Engineers, Forest Service, Tribal, state, local government, and private interests. A draft environmental assessment was distributed to all interested and/or affected parties on December 10, 1999, for a 65-day public comment period. All comments received were analyzed and, where appropriate, were incorporated into the final environmental assessment and/or the Final Rule.

Based on a review and evaluation of the information contained in the environmental assessment, it is my determination that the designation of critical habitat for the spikedace and loach minnow does not constitute a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment under the meaning of section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (as amended). As such, an environmental impact statement is not required.

Regional Director, Region 2

Date

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service