

LITTLE COLORADO SPINEDACE
(Lepidomeda vittata)

STATUS: Threatened with critical habitat (52 FR 35054, September 16, 1987).

SPECIES DESCRIPTION: A small (less than 4 in [10 cm] long) silvery minnow which is darker on the back than the belly. Feeds on aquatic invertebrates.

HABITAT: Inhabits medium to small streams and is characteristically found in pools with water flowing over fine gravel and silt-mud substrates. Many of the streams are seasonally intermittent, at which times the Little Colorado spinedace persists in the deep pools and spring areas that retain water. During flooding the spinedace redistributes itself throughout the stream. Spawning primarily occurs in early summer, but some spawning continues until early fall. Typical habitat ranges in elevation from 1,219 to 2,438 m (4,000-8,000 ft).

RANGE: Historic: Endemic to the upper portions of the Little Colorado River and its north-flowing permanent tributaries on the Mogollon Rim and the northern slopes of the White mountains in eastern Arizona.

Current: Found in East Clear Creek and its tributaries (Coconino County), Chevelon and Silver Creeks (Navajo County), and Nutrioso Creek and the Little Colorado River (Apache County).

REASONS FOR DECLINE/VULNERABILITY: Habitat destruction from impoundment, dewatering, riparian destruction, and other watershed disturbances; use of fish poisons; and the introduction and spread of exotic predatory and competitive fish species.

LAND MANAGEMENT/OWNERSHIP: Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, Arizona Game and Fish Department, Bureau of Land Management, Coconino National Forest, Navajo Nation, State of Arizona, and private.

NOTES: A Recovery Plan was finalized in January 1998 and is available online at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/Documents/RecoveryPlans/Spinedace.pdf>.

Critical habitat includes eighteen miles (29 km) of East Clear Creek in Coconino County; eight miles (13 km) of Chevelon Creek in Navajo County; and five miles (8 km) of Nutrioso Creek in Apache County.

Listed as a Species of Special Concern by the State of Arizona.