Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What action is the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) taking?

A: The Service is withdrawing the proposal to list the headwater chub (*Gila nigra*) and a distinct population segment (DPS) of the roundtail chub (*Gila robusta*) in the lower Colorado River basin as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

In proposing to list the two chubs in October 2015, the Service relied upon a comprehensive species status assessment. At that time, the American Fisheries Society and the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists Joint Committee on the Names of Fishes – the recognized authority on fish taxonomy – considered the headwater chub, roundtail chub and Gila chub to be separate species. In September, the Joint Committee found the three fishes are actually a single species – the roundtail chub (*Gila robusta*).

A listing determination must be supported by available information, including discerning the viable taxonomy of the species (including subspecies and distinct population segments of a vertebrate). Because the entities previously proposed for listing are no longer recognized as species, as defined by the ESA, we have determined that they are not listable entities and we are withdrawing our proposed rule to add them to the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife.

Q: What are the formerly recognized roundtail and headwater chubs and where are they found?

A: The (formerly recognized) headwater chub is a minnow that typically grows up to 8-inches in length. It is dark gray to brown with silvery sides and lives in the upper and middle reaches of moderately sized streams. Headwater chub occurred 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 9 to 14-inch (formerly recognized) roundtail chub 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 Service received a petition singling out the lower basin – Arizona and New Mexico – population for protection. This population today occupies about 52
percent of its historical range and is limited to Arizona’s Little Colorado, Bill Williams, Salt, San Carlos, and Verde river drainages and Aravaipa Creek, and New Mexico’s upper Gila River.

Q: What threats to the roundtail and headwater chubs were identified in the now-withdrawn proposed rule and Species Status Assessment?

A: Threats to these formerly recognized 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. More information about the species biology, habitat, and threats, and the current Species Status Assessment are available on our website at:

- www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/Headwater_Chub.htm
- www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/Roundtail.htm

Q: What prompted the Fish and Wildlife Service to withdraw the proposed listing at this time?

A: On October 7, 2015, we published a proposed rule to list the headwater chub and the lower Colorado River basin roundtail chub DPS (roundtail chub DPS) as threatened species under the ESA. On August 15, 2016, we announced a 6–month extension on the final listing determination that the Act allows when there is substantial disagreement regarding the sufficiency or accuracy of the available data, and reopened the comment period on the proposed listings for 30 days. During this comment period we received new taxonomic information. On November 1, 2016, we reopened the comment period on the proposed listings for an additional 45 days to provide the public additional time to review and consider the proposed rulemakings in light of this new information. In September, the American Fisheries Society and the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists Joint Committee on the Names of Fishes found the three fishes are actually a single species — the roundtail chub (*Gila robusta*). A listing determination must be supported by available information, including discerning the viable taxonomy of the species (including subspecies and distinct population segments of a vertebrate). Because the entities previously proposed for listing are no longer recognized as species, as defined by the ESA, we have determined that they are not listable entities and we are withdrawing our proposed rule to add them to the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife.

Q: Does the formerly recognized and currently listed Gila chub retain protection under the ESA?

A: The Gila chub (formerly *Gila intermedia*) and its critical habitat have been protected under the ESA since 2005. The taxonomic revision of the chubs, resulting in Gila chub being recognized as a part of the large roundtail chub species, necessitates a reevaluation of the ESA status of the Gila chub. Following the publication of this withdrawal, we intend to reevaluate Gila chub status under the Act in the near future and initiate a range-wide species status assessment (SSA) of the newly-recognized roundtail chub. Until the Gila chub is removed from the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife it is still protected under the ESA.
Q: Will the Service evaluate the need to protect the new taxon (roundtail chub) for protection under the ESA?

A: Although not required by the Service, together with conservation partners, we intend to conduct a species status assessment of the now-larger roundtail chub taxon. Of note: the roundtail chub species range now extends from Arizona and New Mexico north to Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming (substantially larger than the initially petitioned taxa). A schedule for conducting the evaluation has not been determined.

Q: Where can I find additional information regarding the roundtail chub (including its previously recognized species) and this listing determination?

A: To learn more, visit our website at: www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona