DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Fish and Wildlife Service

50 CFR Part 17


RIN 1018–AU68

Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Establishment of a Nonessential Experimental Population of Rio Grande Silvery Minnow in the Big Bend Reach of the Rio Grande in Texas

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Proposed rule; notice of availability of draft environmental assessment; reopening of public comment period.

SUMMARY: We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), announce the reopening of the public comment period on the proposed rule and draft environmental assessment regarding our proposal to establish a nonessential experimental population of Rio Grande silvery minnow (Hybognathus amarus), a Federally listed endangered fish, into its historic habitat in the Big Bend reach of the Rio Grande in Presidio, Brewster, and Terrell counties, Texas.

Comments previously submitted on the proposed rule or draft EA need not be resubmitted as they have been incorporated into the public record and will be fully considered in preparation of the final rule and final environmental assessment. Public Comments Solicited

DATES: We will accept public comments received or postmarked on or before March 10, 2008.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments 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: RIN 1018–AU68; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 222; Arlington, VA 22203.

We will not accept e-mail or faxes. We will post all comments on http://www.regulations.gov. This generally means that we will post any personal information you provide us (see the Public Comments Solicited section below for more information).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Adam Zerrenner, Field Supervisor, Austin Ecological Services Field Office, 10711 Burnet Road, Suite 200, Austin, TX 78758; telephone 512/490–0057; facsimile 512/490–0974. If you use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD), call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 800–877–8339.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Background and Additional Information

We propose to reestablish the Rio Grande silvery minnow under section 10(j) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (Act), and to classify it as a nonessential experimental population (NEP) (72 FR 50918). On the Rio Grande, the geographic boundaries of the NEP would extend from Little Box Canyon downstream of Fort Quitman, Hudspeth County, Texas, through Big Bend National Park and the Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River, to Amistad Dam and the nearby railroad bridge (Big Bend reach of the Rio Grande). On the Pecos River, the geographic boundaries of the NEP would extend from the river’s confluence with Independence Creek to its confluence with the Rio Grande. This proposed reestablishment is part of the recovery actions that the Service, Federal and State agencies, and other partners are conducting throughout the species’ historic range. The proposed rule provides a plan for establishing the NEP and provides for limited allowable legal taking of Rio Grande silvery minnows within the defined NEP area. A draft environmental assessment (EA) has been prepared on this proposed action and is available for comment (see ADDRESSES section below).

For background and other information on the proposed rule and draft EA, refer to our notice published in the Federal Register on September 5, 2007 (72 FR 50918).

Public Comments Solicited

appointment, during normal business hours, at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Austin Ecological Services Field Office, 10711 Burnet Road, Suite 200, Austin, TX 78758; telephone 512/490–0057.

You may obtain copies of the original proposed rule and the draft EA from the Austin Ecological Services Field Office at the address listed above or by visiting our Web site at http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/AustinTexas/.

Author

The primary author of this notice is the staff of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Austin Ecological Services Field Office.

Authority

The authority for this action is the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531, et seq.).


Kenneth Stansell,
Acting Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

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