



## **Proposed Establishment of a Nonessential Experimental Population for Rio Grande Silvery Minnow in the Big Bend Reach of the Rio Grande in Texas**

### **About the Document**

**Title:** Proposed rule to establish a nonessential experimental population for Rio Grande Silvery Minnow (*Hybognathus amarus*) in the Big Bend Reach of the Rio Grande in Texas

**Purpose:** The document describes our proposal to reestablish a self-sustaining population of the endangered Rio Grande silvery minnow in potentially suitable habitat within the species' historic range. As identified in the draft revised Rio Grande silvery minnow Recovery plan, reestablishing the Rio Grande silvery minnow in the Big Bend reach of the Rio Grande is an important step along the road to recovery and ultimately removal of the Rio Grande silvery minnow from the endangered species list, in accordance with section 4(f)(1) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*). The proposed rule defines a nonessential experimental area for the species, allowable take within this area, and management strategies for reestablishment of the species.

**Type of Review:** Influential

**Estimated Peer Review Timeline:** September-November 2007

**Estimated Dissemination Date of the Final Rule:** The proposed rule to establish a nonessential experimental population for Rio Grande Silvery Minnow (*Hybognathus amarus*) in the Big Bend Reach of the Rio Grande in Texas will be published on September 5, 2007. We estimate dissemination of the final rule in June 2008.

**Process:** We will solicit comments from three or more independent scientific reviewers on the proposed rule. The scientific peer review will be held concurrently with the public review of the proposed rule from September 5, 2007 to November 5, 2007. We asked both the Technical and Interdisciplinary Teams associated with the National Environmental Policy Act process for this proposal to recommend peer reviewers.

**Criteria for Review Selection:** Peer reviewers will be selected based on the following criteria:

- **Expertise:** Reviews should have knowledge in one or more of the following areas: conservation biology, desert fish conservation, desert fish ecology, knowledge of reestablishing populations of aquatic species, hydrology, and and/or water management.

- Independence: Reviewers should not be employed by the Service. Academic and consulting scientists and managers should have sufficient independence from the Service or the Department if the government supports their work.
- Objectivity: Reviewers should be recognized by their peers as being objective, open-minded, and thoughtful. Reviewers should be comfortable sharing their knowledge and identifying their knowledge gaps.
- Advocacy: Reviewers should not be known or recognized for an affiliation with an advocacy position regarding the protection of this species under the Endangered Species Act.
- Conflict of Interest: Reviewers should not have any financial or other interest that conflicts or that could impair their objectivity.

We will consider the information received from the peer review, as well as all comments received during the public review period, in the preparation of the final rule to establish a nonessential experimental population for Rio Grande Silvery Minnow in the Big Bend Reach of the Rio Grande in Texas.

### **About Public Participation**

The public will have an opportunity to provide comments on the proposed rule, as well as the associated draft Environmental Assessment, from September 5, 2007 to November 5, 2007 (72 FR 50918). The proposed rule and final rule, as well as other information about the silvery minnow will be posted on the Service's website at <http://ecos.fws.gov/speciesProfile/SpeciesReport.do?spcode=E07L>.

This peer review plan is made available on this website to allow the public to monitor our compliance with the Office of Management and Budget's Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review.

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