



NEWS FROM NOAA

NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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NOAA05-R106
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 5, 2005

NOAA FISHERIES PROPOSES LISTING OF SOUTHERN POPULATION OF NORTH AMERICAN GREEN STURGEON AS THREATENED UNDER THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service has today filed with the Federal Register a proposed rule to list North American green sturgeon south of the Eel River, Calif., (southern distinct population segment or DPS) as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. The population of green sturgeon north of and including the Eel River (northern DPS) did not warrant listing under the ESA. NOAA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, is an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

In January 2003, NOAA Fisheries determined that neither the northern nor the southern DPS of green sturgeon warranted listing under the ESA. However, that determination was legally challenged, and in March 2004 the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California set aside the decision and remanded the case for further evaluation by NOAA Fisheries. The proposed rule to be filed by NOAA Fisheries is a result of that re-evaluation.

"New information has become available about green sturgeon during the past year from our biological review team and from additional habitat assessment in California's Central Valley," said Bill Hogarth, NOAA Fisheries assistant administrator.

The BRT used previous studies of salmon in the central valley to examine the likelihood that spawning habitat has been lost within the range of the southern green sturgeon DPS. Green sturgeon are an anadromous species requiring similar habitat features as salmon for survival and reproduction. It was determined that dams built in the upper Sacramento and Feather Rivers likely blocked migration of green sturgeon which led to a significant reduction of the southern DPS's historical habitat.

The presence of two spawning populations in the northern DPS and the likely continued spawning in other rivers reaffirms the previous determination that this population does not warrant listing under the ESA. Due to concerns over the uncertainty and availability of data, the northern DPS will be placed on NOAA Fisheries' Species of Concern List and its status will be re-assessed within five years, if information warrants.

The BRT was composed of scientists from the agency's Southwest Fisheries Science Center, Northwest Fisheries Science Center, and the U.S. Geological Survey. The updated information from the BRT was also reviewed by the States of Washington, Oregon and California, the Yurok and Hoopa Tribes, the Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Bay-Delta Program.

Green sturgeon inhabit near-shore marine waters from Mexico to the Bering Sea and are commonly observed in bays and estuaries along the western coast of North America with particularly large concentrations entering the Columbia River estuary, Willapa Bay, and Grays Harbor during the late summer. It is a long-lived, slow-growing fish and is the most marine oriented of the sturgeon species. There is evidence that green sturgeon spawn in the Klamath-Trinity, Sacramento and Rogue Rivers, with most of the spawning thought to occur in the Klamath-Trinity River.

Comments on this proposal must be received within 90 days after date of publication of the Proposed Rule in the Federal Register. Comments may be submitted by any of the following methods:

- E-Mail: GreenSturgeon.Comments@noaa.gov
- Federal e-Rulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the instructions for submitting comments.
- Mail: Submit written comments to Chief, Protected Resources Division, Southwest Region, National Marine Fisheries Service, 501 West Ocean Blvd., Suite 4200, Long Beach, CA, 90802-4213.

NOAA Fisheries is dedicated to providing and preserving the nation's living marine resources and their habitat through scientific research, management, and enforcement. NOAA Fisheries provides effective stewardship of these resources for the benefit of the nation, supporting coastal communities that depend upon them, and helping to provide safe and healthy seafood to consumers and recreational opportunities for the American public.

NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources.

On the Web:

Green Sturgeon Proposed Rule: http://swr.nmfs.noaa.gov/news/green_st.pdf

NOAA: www.noaa.gov

NOAA Fisheries: www.nmfs.noaa.gov

Final version of updated Green Sturgeon Status Review:

<http://swr.nmfs.noaa.gov/psd/Final%20Green%20Sturgeon%20Status%20Review%20Update.pdf>

Co-manager draft of the Updated Green Sturgeon Status Review is available upon request: http://swr.nmfs.noaa.gov/Request_Co-manager_Draft.htm