



# News Release

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## **Petition to Protect Two Declining Fishes Found Adequate -Consideration for Endangered Species Status Proceeds-**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service found that a petition to protect the headwater chub and the Lower Colorado River basin population of the roundtail chub under the Endangered Species Act provides sufficient information to warrant further consideration. A time frame to review the chubs' status and threats has been initiated as a result of a court settlement. The Service is seeking scientific and commercial information prior to determining whether to propose adding them to the list of threatened or endangered species. The chubs currently occur throughout much of Arizona and in New Mexico's Gila River headwaters.

Today's finding acknowledges that the Center for Biological Diversity's petition to protect the chubs under the Endangered Species Act provides a reasonable case. "However, our finding expresses no view as to the ultimate issue of whether the species should be listed," said H. Dale Hall, the Service's Southwest Regional Director. "We will reach a conclusion on that issue only after a thorough review of the species' status. We will perform a rigorous, critical analysis of the best available scientific and commercial information, not just the information in the petition. That's why we're calling for information at this time."

The 9- to 14-inch roundtail chub (*Gila robusta*) 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 petition singles out the lower basin – Arizona and New Mexico – population for protection. This population today occupies about 18 percent of its historical range and is limited to Arizona's Little Colorado, Bill Williams, Salt and Verde river drainages and Aravaipa Creek, and New Mexico's upper Gila River.

The smaller headwater chub (*Gila nigra*) 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 areas, but have a smaller distribution.

Both chub species are subject to predation and competition with nonnative fishes, and habitat destruction due to dewatering, impoundment, channelization, and channel changes caused by alteration of riparian vegetation and watershed degradation from mining, livestock overgrazing, roads, water pollution, urban and suburban development, and groundwater pumping.

The Service will make a determination by April 6, 2006, as to whether listing is warranted, not warranted, or warranted but precluded. Additional information, comments and suggestions from the public, other concerned governmental agencies, Native American Tribes, the scientific community, industry, or any other interested parties concerning the status of the roundtail and headwater chubs is welcome. In particular,

information is sought regarding the chubs' historical and current status and distribution, their biology and ecology, ongoing conservation measures for the species and their habitat, and threats to the chubs and their habitat.

Roundtail and headwater chub status and threat information, comments or questions concerning this petition and finding should be submitted to the Field Supervisor, Arizona Ecological Services Office, 2321 West Royal Palm Road, Suite 103, Phoenix, Arizona 85021-4951 prior to September 12, 2005.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies. Visit the Service's website at <http://www.fws.gov>.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: Photographs of chubs are available by contacting Elizabeth Slown ([elizabeth\\_slown@fws.gov](mailto:elizabeth_slown@fws.gov)) or at <http://arizonaes.fws.gov>.