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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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NOAA Proposes Critical Habitat for Southern Population of North American Green Sturgeon

NOAA's Fisheries Service is seeking public comment on a proposal that identifies critical habitat for a distinct group of North American green sturgeon that spawn in California's Sacramento River but migrate along the west coast of Mexico, the United States, and Canada.

In April 2006, NOAA's Fisheries Service listed what is known as the southern segment of North American green sturgeon as threatened under the Endangered Species Act and sought public input to assist in the identification of critical habitat for the species. The listing was due in part to the degradation of the primary spawning habitat in the Sacramento River and the declining numbers of green sturgeon.

The Endangered Species Act requires a review of critical habitat for designation whenever a species is listed for protection. A critical habitat designation only applies when federal projects, permits or funding are involved and does not apply to citizens engaged in activities on private land that do not involve a federal agency.

Using information previously provided by the public and the agency's own data, NOAA's Fisheries Service proposes the following areas as critical habitat:

- Coastal U.S. marine waters within 110 meters (361 feet) depth from and including Monterey Bay, Calif., north to Cape Flattery, Wash., including the Strait of Juan de Fuca, to the U.S. border with Canada.
- The Sacramento River, lower Feather River, lower Yuba River, the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and Suisun, San Pablo and San Francisco bays in California.
- The lower Columbia River estuary.
- Humboldt Bay, Calif.; Coos Bay, Winchester Bay and Yaquina Bay, Ore.; and Willapa Bay and Grays Harbor, Wash.

The areas proposed for designation comprise approximately 325 miles of freshwater river habitat, 1,058 square miles of estuarine habitat, 11,927 square miles of coastal marine habitat and 136 square miles of habitat within the Yolo and Sutter bypasses, part of the Sacramento River Flood Control Project.

Comments may be submitted for this proposed rule as listed below. All comments received are a part of the public record and will generally be posted to <http://www.regulations.gov>.

- Electronic: Go to the Federal eRulemaking Portal, <http://www.regulations.gov>, and follow instructions for submitting comments.
- Fax to 562-980-4027 Attn: Melissa Neuman
- Mail: Chief, Protected Resources Division, Southwest Region, NOAA's Fisheries Service, 650 Capitol Mall, Sacramento, CA 95814-4706

The proposed rule and supporting documents can be found at www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr, look under "Recent News and Hot Topics."

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