

Jimmy Evans, Fisheries Biologist with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources:

Well we were conducting a fishery survey on the Oconee River in 1991 for the relicensing of Sinclair Dam when we collected these five large fish, members of the sucker family that we could not identify so we contacted some local experts on this group of fish and conducted an investigation and pieced together gradually over a period of couple of years exactly what this fish was. Well it turns out that the robust redhorse was actually initially described by the naturalist Edward Cope in 1869 from the Atkin River in North Carolina and then essentially disappeared from the scientific record for over 100 years until these fish from the Oconee River led to its rediscovery and really the beginning of this now 20-year recovery effort.

Joe E. Slaughter IV, Environmental Affairs, Georgia Power:

Georgia Power became involved with robust redhorse because the fish was actually discovered in the Oconee River below one of our hydro plants during a relicensing project. So from a dam owner perspective, that can be a little interesting. All of a sudden this fish species that nobody's seen for 100 years, that may in fact be in jeopardy is now in our tailrace and ultimately affects the way that we operate. So Georgia Power's been involved since the very beginning.

Alice Lawrence, Fish and Wildlife Biologist, Georgia Ecological Services Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Georgia Department of Natural Resources and Georgia Power collaboratively developed an agreement called a Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances or CCAA to aid in the recovery of the robust redhorse. Broadly speaking, CCAAs are one tool in our tool box that we can collectively use to recover these at-risk species. CCAAs are a prelisting recovery approach, meaning that the Service works with our non-federal partners to conserve these at-risk species before they are listed under the Endangered Species Act. Specifically speaking for the Robust Redhorse CCAA, we had two main objectives. The first objective was to establish a new population within the historic range of the species, and that's where we are today, the Ocmulgee River, Georgia, and the second objective was to contribute to the understanding of the habitat use and life history requirements of the fish.

Dr. Cecil Jennings, Leader and Adjunct Professor, Georgia Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, U.S. Geological Survey

When the robust redhorse was first discovered, it qualified for listing, but because of the urgency of the need for conservation, a prelisting recovery approach was decided as the course of action. We've gone from one population to six populations,

and those populations seem to be in really good shape, so the need for listing is much less now than when we found the animal initially. The candidate conservation agreement is a good vehicle for formalizing the work to be done in any conservation action. In this particular case, we had a very large group of partners and stakeholders each doing various conservation measures.

Jimmy Evans, Fisheries Biologist with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources:

Like all species, the robust redhorse is the legacy of millions of years of evolution, and struggle that would be a tragedy to lose. We cannot afford to lose any more species. I mean, if our ecosystems can't support a diversity of species then at some point maybe at some point they would not be able to support us.

Joe E. Slaughter IV, Environmental Affairs, Georgia Power:

The question that we're often asked is was it worth it, was it worth engaging in this and putting forth a lot of effort and a lot of money up front in order to ultimately, or hopefully protect the species? Well the reality is from a business perspective yes, because there's a lot more risk in uncertainty in the future than there is in knowing what your costs are. So while we may spend thousands of dollars on conservation activities now, it's a lot less risky than finding out 10 years down the road that we have a significant endangered species issue that could be costly orders of magnitude greater than what we've spent already so definitely from a business perspective dealing with the known is much cheaper than dealing with the unknown.