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Endangered Species Act: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Proposes to List Mississippi Fish as a Threatened Species

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United States Fish and Wildlife Service ("Service") has proposed to list the Pearl darter as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act ("ESA").

The Pearl darter is generally found in the State of Mississippi.

If the Service finalizes the proposed rule, it would extend the ESA's protection to the Pearl darter. Therefore, the effect of finalizing the regulation would be to add the fish to the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife.

The Pearl darter has historically been found in localized sites within the Pearl and Pascagoula River drainages of Mississippi and Louisiana. However, the Service states that the quantified range of the Pearl darter, expressed in river miles, has not been well-defined by researchers. Nevertheless, the Service states that a reanalysis of collection records compiled from the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science estimates the species' historical range to be approximately 440 miles in the Pearl River and 335 miles in the Pascagoula River system. The Service further states that there have been no verifiable records of the Pearl darter from the Pearl River drainage in over 40 years. Instead, Pearl darters are believed to occur in scattered sites within approximately 279 miles of the Pascagoula drainage. Further, it has been sporadically found within the Pascagoula, Chickasawhay, and Leaf Rivers.

The Service states that one reason for classifying the Pearl darter as threatened is destruction, modification and curtailment of its habitat. One example given is the absence of the Pearl darter from the Pearl River drainage. The absence of the species in this waterbody is deemed to be increasing sedimentation from

habitat modification. Other factors affecting the Pearl darter have been cited such as water pollution, sand and gravel mining, and agricultural.

The Service is accepting comments on the proposed rule.

[A link to the proposed rule can be found here.](#)