



**Walter Wright, Jr.**  
wwright@mwlaw.com  
(501) 688.8839

# Missouri Distinct Population of the Eastern Hellbender Salamander/Endangered Species Act: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Announces Endangered Species Designation

03/11/2021

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (“FWS”) published a March 9th Federal Register Notice designating a Missouri distinct population of the eastern hellbender salamander (“Missouri DPS”) as endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act (“ESA”). See 86 Fed. Reg. 13465.

The Missouri DPS is therefore added to the list of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife in Part 17 of title V of the Code of Federal Regulations. See 50 C.F.R. 17.11(h).

FWS describes the Missouri DPS range as completely within the boundaries of the State of Missouri. They are stated to occur in:

- Big River
- Big Piney River
- Courtois Creek
- Gasconade River
- Huzzah Creek
- Meramec River
- Niangua River
- Osage Fork of the Gasconade River

River-dwelling hellbenders are described as North America’s largest salamanders. They can exceed two feet and reside in clear, fast-flowing mountain streams.

A separate subspecies of hellbender is the Ozark hellbender. It is found in the southern portion of Missouri and northern Arkansas. The Ozark hellbender was listed as endangered in 2011.

The FWS describes in the preamble of the Federal Register the following in relation to its final rule:

- Regulatory Framework
- Analytical Framework
- Summary of Biological Status and Threats

- Influences on the Missouri DPS of Eastern Hellbender
- Sedimentation
- Water Quality Degradation
- Disease
- Habitat Disturbance
- Small Populations, Population Fragmentation, and Isolation
- Increased Abundance of Species of Predators
- Direct Mortality or Permanent Removal of Animals
- Synergistic Effects
- Conservation Efforts
- Summary of Comments and Recommendations
- Summary of Changes from the Proposed Rule
- Distinct Population Segment Analysis
- Determination of Missouri DPS of Eastern Hellbender Status
- Status Throughout a Significant Portion of its Range
- Determination of Status
- Critical Habitat

A copy of the Federal Register Notice can be downloaded [here](#).