

Razorback Sucker/Endangered Species Act: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Proposed Reclassification



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The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (“Service”) announced in a July 7th Federal Register Notice a proposed Endangered Species Act (“ESA”) reclassification of the razorback sucker from endangered to threatened. See 86 Fed. Reg. 35708.

The Service proposed reclassification from an endangered species to a threatened species is denominated a “downlisting.”

“Endangered species” is defined as any species that is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

“Threatened species” is defined as any species that is likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

For the Service to downlist a species it is required to determine that threats have been eliminated or controlled. In making this assessment, the Service reviews five factors:

1. Is there a present or threatened destruction, modification, or curtailment of the species’ habitat or range?
2. Is the species subject to over-utilization for commercial, recreational, scientific, or educational purposes?
3. Is disease or predation a factor?
4. Are there adequate existing regulatory mechanisms in place, taking into account the initiatives by states and other organizations to protect the species or habitat?
5. Are other natural or manmade factors affecting its continued existence?

Note that despite the name “Razorback” the species habitat does not include the State of Arkansas.

The razorback sucker is a native fish of the Colorado River and its tributaries. It is described as one of the largest suckers in North America. It can potentially grow up to three feet in length.

The proposed reclassification is stated to be based on the Service’s belief that the species’ status has been improved and maintained through:

- Implementation of conservation actions such as:
- Stocking
- Flow

- Habitat management
- Control of invasive species

The Service states it belief that conservation programs have improved conditions such that:

. . . the razorback sucker now has multiple, large, reproducing populations distributed across much of its originally occupied range, with four populations in the upper basin and three populations in the lower basin.

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