



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

# Salamander Mussel (Range Includes Arkansas)/Endangered Species Act: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Proposed Endangered Designation/Critical Habitat

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The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (“Service”) published a proposed rule in the August 22nd Federal Register that would list the salamander mussel as an endangered species under the Endangered Species Act (“ESA”). See 88 Fed. Reg. 57224.

The proposed rule would also designate critical habitat for the salamander mussel.

The Service describes the salamander mussel as a small, thin-shelled species of freshwater mussel. It is currently found in the following 14 states:

- Arkansas
- Illinois
- Indiana
- Iowa
- Kentucky
- Michigan
- Minnesota
- Missouri
- New York
- Ohio
- Pennsylvania
- Tennessee
- West Virginia
- Wisconsin

The creature’s habitat is stated to include rivers and streams:

. . . with fairly swift velocities but prefers shelter habitat with space under slab rock/bedrock crevice-type structures that are dark, where they are in contact with a solid surface, and where there is stability from swift current.

The ESA requires that the Service determine whether any species is an endangered or threatened species because of any of the following factors:

1. The present or threatened destruction, modification, or curtailment of its habitat or range;
2. Overutilization for commercial, recreational, scientific, or educational purposes;
3. Disease or predation;
4. The inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms; or
5. Other natural or manmade factors affecting its continued existence.

The Service states that after evaluating threats to the salamander mussel and assessing the cumulative effect of threats under the previously referenced factors it determined that it has experienced a 40 percent reduction in the number of populations from historical conditions. It further concluded that more than 80 percent of all populations of the species are at high risk from contaminants, hydrological alteration, land use changes, loss of connectivity or host species' vulnerabilities.

As a result, the current and ongoing threats are stated to be putting the majority of the remaining populations at risk of reduced resiliency and potential extirpation, and the existing regulatory mechanisms are not adequately reducing the impact of the threats to the species.

The proposed rule also designates as critical habitat for the salamander mussel approximately 2,012 river miles in the following states:

- Indiana
- Kentucky
- Michigan
- Minnesota
- New York
- Ohio
- Pennsylvania
- Tennessee
- West Virginia
- Wisconsin

A copy of the proposed rule can be downloaded [here](#).