Citizen Suit Action/Endangered Species Act: Center for Biological Diversity Sues U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Regarding Pearl River Map Turtle



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The Center for Biological Diversity ("CBD") filed a Complaint for Declaratory and Injunctive Relief ("Complaint") against the United States Fish and Wildlife Service ("Service") on July 15th alleging a failure to designate critical habitat for the Pearl River Map Turtle within the statutory deadlines set by the Endangered Species Act ("ESA").

The Pearl River Map Turtle is described as endemic to the Pearl River system in Louisiana and Mississippi. The species is stated to be threatened with extinction due to habitat degradation and loss from:

- Dam construction.
- River channelization.
- Degraded water quality from agricultural runoff, mining, and development.

The effects of climate change and target shooting along for collection for the pet trade have been listed as additional factors.

The Service is stated to have proposed listing the Pearl River Map Turtle following a positive 90-day finding. It was then designated as threatened on November 23, 2021.

The Service is further stated to have listed the Pearl River Map Turtle as threatened on July 12, 2024. Further, the Service is stated to have not proposed a rule designating critical habitat for the Pearl River Map Turtle.

CBD alleges that the July 12, 2024 finding meant the Service had a deadline for designating critical habitat by July 12, 2025. The Service is alleged to have failed to properly proposed any critical habitat designation, violating the ESA.

A copy of the Complaint can be found here.