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



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The United States Fish and Wildlife Service ("Service") announced in a July 17th Federal Register notice a final Endangered Species Act ("ESA") reclassification of the Razorback Sucker from endangered to threatened. See 91 Fed. Reg. 44756.

The Service's proposed reclassification from an endangered species to a threatened species is denominated a "downlisting."

An endangered species is defined as any species that is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

A 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 are in control.

Five factors are reviewed:

- The present or threatened destruction, modification, or curtailment of its habitat or range;
- Overutilization for commercial, recreational, scientific, or educational purposes;
- Disease or predation;
- Inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms; or
- 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 and can potentially grow up to three feet in length.

The reclassification is stated to be based upon 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 has previously stated 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.

A copy of the Federal Register notice can be found here.