Razorback Sucker *Xyrauchen texanus*
Proposed Downlisting with 4(d)

Julie Stahli
Upper Colorado River
Endangered Fish Recovery Program

Photo credit: Melanie Fischer, USFWS
Propose to reclassify the razorback sucker from endangered to threatened and issue a 4(d) rule.

Razorback sucker is a *conservation reliant species*.

Downlisting and recovery are dependent on continued management actions, including propagation.
SSA Involvement

Delphi Process
- 47 biologists
- Navajo Nation
- Southern Ute
- States
- Federal Agencies
- Universities

Current and Future Condition
- 17 member team
- States
- FWS
- USBR
- NPS
- WAPA
- Upper CO Program
- San Juan Program
- LCR MSCP

Review
- Peer Review: CSU, USGS, NPS
- Colorado
- New Mexico
- FWS
- USBR
- Marsh & Assoc.
- University Experts
- Water users
- USGS
- Navajo Nation
- San Juan Program
- LCR MSCP
Species Overview

Species Needs identified in SSA

• Habitat
  – Spawning substrate
  – Backwaters, floodplains or sheltered shorelines
  – Deep pools, eddies

• Suitable temperature and water quality

• Sufficient food

• Variable flows to connect habitat

• Range & Connectivity between populations
Geographic Extent

- Colorado River Basin
  - Green River
  - Colorado and Gunnison rivers
  - San Juan River
  - Lake Powell
  - Lake Mead (and river)
  - Lake Mohave (and river)
  - Lake Havasu (and river)
  - Colorado River below Parker Dam
- Historically present in the Gila Basin
History
Current Condition

- **Upper Basin**
  - Resources generally sufficient
  - Large population in the Green, supported by Colorado & San Juan
  - Potential of Lake Powell

- **Lower Basin**
  - Resource conditions variable
  - Small self-sustaining population in Lake Mead
  - Persistent populations in Lake Mohave and Lake Havasu
  - Extirpated condition below Parker Dam
Threats

- Nonnative predation
- Habitat – flow regime
- Climate change
Conservation Actions

- Water management
- Stocking and augmentation
- Nonnative removal
- Research and Monitoring
Recovery and Conservation Programs

Upper Colorado River
Endangered Fish Recovery Program

Lower Colorado River
Multi-Species Conservation Program

Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program
Recovery Programs

- Stock 23,400 razorback sucker annually
- Manage flows to support razorback sucker
  - Flow recommendations established for all major rivers
  - Larval transport into managed wetland habitats
  - Managed wetlands have provided the first signs of wild recruitment in the upper basin
- Nonnative fish removal occurs in over 900 miles of river
- Fish passages allow for free movement across the upper basin
  - Except for the San Juan Waterfall
- Canal screens prevent entrainment
- Monitoring
- Adaptive management

Photo credit: UDWR
Future Status of the Programs

- Programs’ Cooperative Agreements signed through 2023
- Funding authorized through 2023
- Bills require a Report to Congress in FY22
  - Accomplishments & Status of the fish
  - Expenditures & Post 2023 Activities & costs
  - Negotiations for programs post-2023 are ongoing
Habitat Conservation Plan

• LCR-MSCP manages species below Hoover Dam under the HCP (2004)

• Conservation Measures
  – Create 360 acres of razorback sucker habitat
  – Stock up to 660,000 subadult razorback sucker
  – Support Lake Mohave genetic refuge
  – Monitor populations (including Lake Mead)
Reclassify from endangered to threatened

Not in danger of extinction throughout its range, based on current conditions, thus does not meet endangered definition;

- Widely distributed: 7 populations; rivers and reservoirs
- Numerous adults: 50,000+ hatchery produced adults in system
- Successful stocking: Long-lived adults occupy habitats far from stocking locations
- Adapting to wild: Adults migrate and spawn in many locations
- Incomplete life cycle: Wild recruitment remains rare
Reclassify from endangered to threatened

Likely to become an endangered species in the foreseeable future of 30 years, thus **does meet threatened definition**;

- Management actions could diminish
- Stocking could cease to be an effective management tool
- Continued management could improve species conditions to varying degrees
Section 4(d) of the ESA directs the Service to issue regulations deemed “necessary and advisable to provide for the conservation of threatened species.”

What this means

• Incentivize positive conservation actions
• Streamline the regulatory process for minor impacts
• Clarify/simplify what forms of take of are and are not prohibited
4(d) Rule

Take will continue to be prohibited, except for the following forms of take that would be excepted under the Act:

1. Population restoration efforts including captive breeding, stocking and reintroduction of individuals;
2. Display of razorback sucker for educational purposes;
3. Creating and managing nursery habitat for razorback sucker;
4. Removal or suppression of nonnative fish species;
5. Catch-and-release angling activities; and
6. Chemical treatments in support of the recovery of razorback sucker
Next Steps

- Proposed rule is currently open for public comment - closes September 6th
  - FWS will consider and incorporate all new information into final rule
  - Revision of recovery goals
Thank You – Questions?

julie_stahli@fws.gov
(303) 236-4573
Science Team for Scenario Development

- Paul Badame – Utah
- Shane Capron – WAPA
- Pete Cavalli – Wyoming
- Tom Chart – UCRRP
- Harry Crockett – Colorado
- Scott Durst – San Juan RIP
- Mark Grover – Arizona
- Jess Gwinn – FWS R2 ES
- Mark McKinstry – USBR
- Dale Ryden – FWS R6 FAC
- Brandon Senger – Nevada
- David Speas – USBR
- Jim Stolberg – LCR MSCP
- Melissa Trammell – NPS
- David Vigil – California
- Matt Zeigler – New Mexico
# Razorback Sucker
## SSA Preparation & Review

### Writing Team

**UCRRP**
- Julie Stahli
- Tom Chart
- Kevin McAbee

**BIO-WEST**
- Brandon Albrecht
- Ron Kegerries
- Sean Keenan
- Harrison Mohn
- Ron Rogers

### Peer Review

- Koreen Zelasko - CSU
- Summer Burdick - USGS
- Robert Schelley – NPS

### Stakeholder Review

- Upper Colorado and San Juan Recovery Programs’ Biology Committees
- Tribal Partners
- Lower Basin Programs’ Representatives (identified by R2)

### Reviews Received

- State of Colorado
- State of Arizona
- State of New Mexico
- Brian Kesner
- Paul Marsh
- Chuck Minckley
- Tom Wesche
- Dave Speas
- R2 Fisheries
- Tom Dowling
- Bill Stewart
- San Juan Program
- Tom Pitts
- Scott Vanderkooi