



**U.S. Fish And Wildlife Service**  
Southwest Region

# **ESA Fish Species Recovery Planning & Implementation Updates**

*Colorado River Edition*

July 2025



## General Overview

**Recovery plans** are one piece of a three-part framework; informed by the **Species Status Assessment** and implemented via the **Recovery Implementation Strategy**.

**A Species Status Assessment (SSA)** is a scientific evaluation conducted by the USFWS to assess a species' viability, or the likelihood of its ability to sustain populations in the wild. This rigorous, repeatable, and focused scientific process is primarily used as a basis for ESA decisions and is guided by the "3 Rs" of conservation biology: **Resiliency** (the ability of populations to withstand random events), **Redundancy** (the ability of the species, throughout its range, to cope with catastrophic events), and **Representation** (the diversity of genetic and ecological variation across the species' range).

## General Overview

**Recovery plans** contain a **vision** the species' recovered state (described in terms of the 3Rs), identification of **threats that need to be ameliorated**, and a **recovery strategy** of how to get there. In updated plans the strategy focuses at an over-arching, "visionary" level, and describes the biological state of recovery, the ameliorated or mitigated state of the threats, and the long-term persistence of these conditions. All Recovery Plans must contain **Recovery Criteria**, **Recovery Actions**, and associated **time and cost estimates**.

The **Recovery Implementation Strategy (RIS)**, is a short-term, more flexible operational document focused on how, when, and with whom the recovery actions will be implemented. In other words, **the on-the-ground projects that will be done to carry out the recovery actions**.

# Five-Year Review

**A Five-Year Review** uses the best available scientific and commercial data on a species to determine whether its classification status under the ESA has potentially changed since the time of its listing or its last status review.

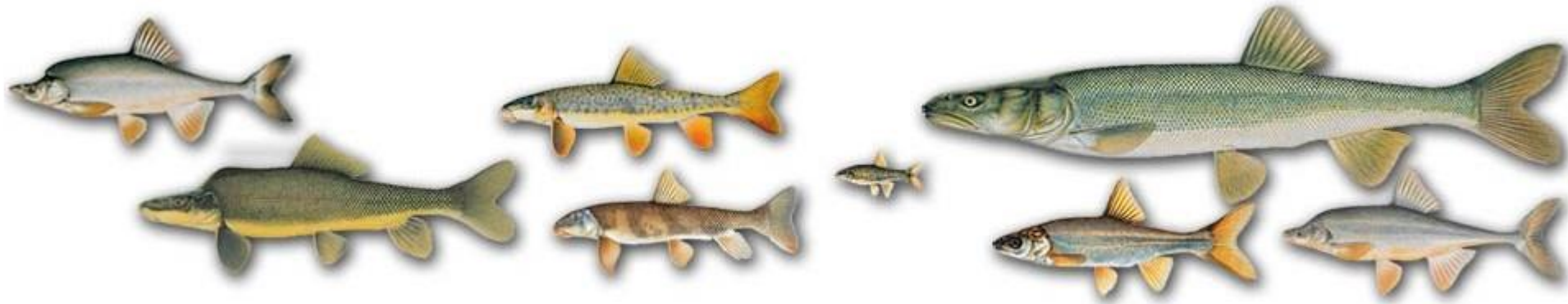
A five-year review utilizes a **Species Status Assessment (SSA)** if one has been completed for the species. Upon completion of a five-year review, the USFWS can make four possible **recommendations**:

- (1) Reclassify the species from threatened to endangered (uplist);
- (2) Reclassify the species from endangered to threatened (downlist);
- (3) Remove the species from the List (delist); or
- (4) Maintain the species' current classification.

**A 5-year review does not automatically change a species' status**







## Colorado pikeminnow – Endangered

- Species Status Assessment  
Updated & Released **May 2025**
- Recovery Plan  
Updated **September 2023**
- Recovery Implementation  
Strategy Updated **June 2023**
- **Five-Year Review**  
Updated & Released **May 2025**

# Colorado Pikeminnow

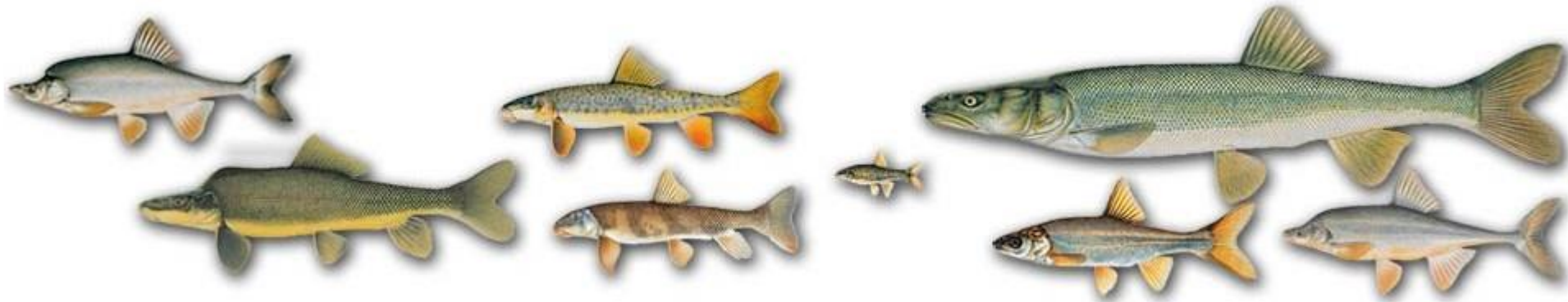
Upper Colorado River



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## **Humpback Chub** — Downlisted to Threatened **October 2021**

- **Species Status Assessment** = 2018  
Update Anticipated **December 2025**
- **Recovery Plan** = 1990  
Update Anticipated **2025/2026**
- **Recovery Implementation Strategy**  
Update Anticipated **2025/2026**
- **Five-Year Review** = October 2021  
Update Anticipated **2026**

# Humpback Chub

Upper Colorado River

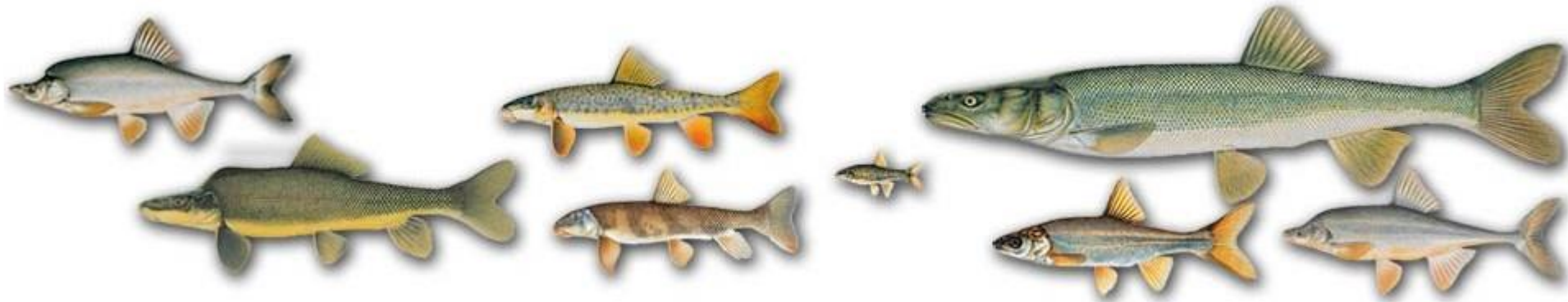


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**Razorback Sucker** — Endangered  
Proposed Downlisting Rule = July 2021  
Final Rule anticipated 2025/2026\*\*

- **Species Status Assessment = 2018**  
Update under review with Final Rule
- **Recovery Plan = 2002**
- **Recovery Implementation Strategy**  
n/a
- **Five-Year Review = 2018**

\*\*Once a Final Rule is approved the “clock” will start for updates to the 5 Year Review and SSA

# Razorback Sucker

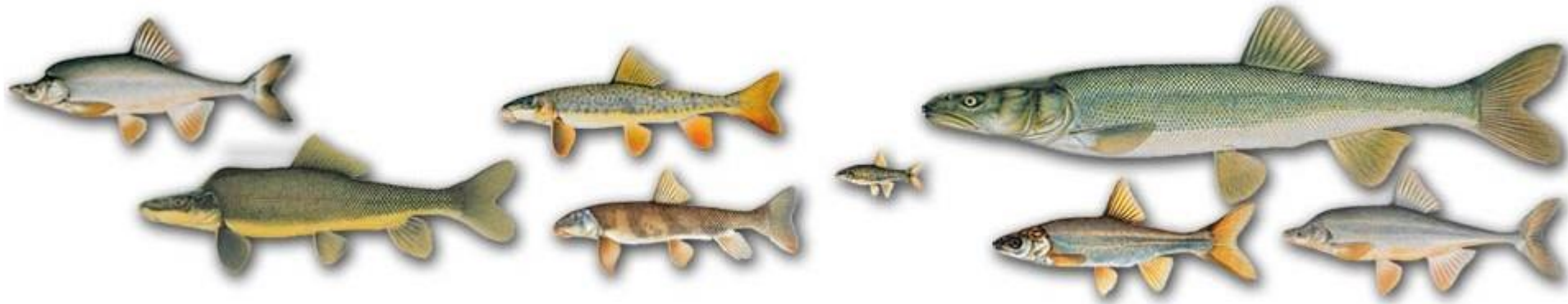
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## **Bonytail** — Endangered

- **Species Status Assessment** – Not enough data
- **Recovery Plan** – 2002
- **Recovery Implementation Strategy** n/a
- **Five-Year Review** – 2024



# Bonytail

Upper Colorado River



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# Example Demographic and Threat Based Recovery Criteria (Pikeminnow)

1. Population stability— Each of the 3 subbasins demonstrate stable or increasing over a consecutive 15-year period.
2. Population size—thresholds met over a consecutive 10-year period for all 3 subbasin populations.
3. Recruitment—Wild recruitment to maturity equals or exceeds adult mortality (10–15 years) in all 3 subbasins.
4. Reproductive success—Mean density of wild age-0 fish meets thresholds over 10-year period for all 3 subbasins.

Population	Adult Abundance over a consecutive 10-year period	
	Recovery Criteria 2: Downlisting	Recovery Criteria 2: Delisting
Green River Subbasin	≥ 2,600 adults	≥ 3,100 adults
Upper Colorado River Subbasin	≥ 500 adults	≥ 760 adults
San Juan River Subbasin	≥ 250 adults	≥ 250 adults

River Subbasin	Downlisting and Delisting Criteria
Green River subbasin	≥5 age-0 per 100m <sup>2</sup> habitat
Upper Colorado River subbasin	≥3.3 age-0 per 100m <sup>2</sup> habitat
San Juan River subbasin	≥1.4 age-0 per 100m <sup>2</sup> habitat

Demographic  
Criteria

5. Regulatory mechanisms or conservation plans are in place that include **stakeholder commitments to management actions** that support Colorado pikeminnow populations beyond delisting in the Colorado, Green, and San Juan subbasins. Stakeholders should commit, at a minimum, to **managing nonnative fishes, operating fish passages, and maintaining a genetic refuge.**
6. Flow management plans are in place that include **stakeholder commitments to provide flows that support current populations** of Colorado pikeminnow beyond delisting in the Colorado, Green, and San Juan basins. Commitments should include legally **protecting flows in Colorado pikeminnow designated critical habitat** in accordance with tribal, state, and federal laws. Commitments should also include meeting flow recommendations in the Colorado, Green, Gunnison, San Juan, White, and Yampa rivers and revising those recommendations when appropriate.

Threat Based  
Criteria

