

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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FOUR SOUTHEASTERN FISH SPECIES PROPOSED AS ENDANGERED

Four species of fish have been proposed for the endangered species list by the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Keith M. Schreiner, Associate Director, announced today.

The proposal, published in the November 29 Federal Register also lists critical habitat for the Cahaba shiner, spring pygmy sunfish, pygmy sculpin, and the goldline darter. All of the species occur in Alabama with the goldline darter also found in Georgia. All are small, relatively unknown species.

The water quality of the Cahaba River in central Alabama where the Cahaba shiner occurs has been degraded in the last 15 years. The major problem has been the degradation of water quality by sewage treatment plants and from coal strip mining activities.

The spring pygmy sunfish, known only from Beaverdam Spring in Limestone County, was thought to be extinct until it was rediscovered in 1973. Its habitat of dense, submerged aquatic vegetation in shallow water has also been spoiled by siltation and pollution. Cultivation adjacent to the spring is contributing to heavy silt loads and insecticides carried in runoff.

The primary threats to the pygmy sculpin, which is found in Calhoun County, have been aquatic vegetation control and increased pumping of water by the local government. The species has also been affected by toxic chemicals from the U.S. Army's Anniston Ordnance Depot. However, a program to detoxify wastes at the depot was begun in 1976.

The goldline darter, known only from the Cahaba and Coosawattee Rivers of the Mobile basin is threatened by pollution, domestic and industrial waste, and acid drainage from strip mining.

There are no known major Federal projects which would be adversely affected by this proposal. The Endangered Species Act prohibits any Federal agency from authorizing, funding, or carrying out any action that would adversely affect a listed species or its critical habitat.

Interested persons who wish to participate in this rulemaking should write the Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (OES), Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240. All comments received by January 30, 1978, will be considered.

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