

Dated: July 6, 2021.

Jerry L Rigdon,

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Department of Homeland Security.*

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

[Docket No. FWS-R2-ES-2020-0040;
FXES11130200000-201-FF02ENEH00]

Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Draft Revised Recovery Plan for Gila Trout

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service,
Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability; request
for comment.

SUMMARY: We, the U.S. Fish and
Wildlife Service, announce the
availability of our draft revised recovery
plan for the Gila trout, listed as
threatened under the Endangered
Species Act. This fish species is
endemic to mountain streams within the
upper Gila River basin in New Mexico
and Arizona. We provide this notice to
seek comments from the public and
Federal, Tribal, State, and local
governments.

DATES: We must receive written
comments on or before September 10,
2021.

ADDRESSES:

Reviewing Documents: You may
obtain a copy of the draft revised
recovery plan and recovery
implementation strategy in Docket No.
FWS-R2-ES-2020-0040 at <http://www.regulations.gov>.

Submitting Comments: You may
submit comments by one of the
following methods:

- *Federal eRulemaking Portal:* <http://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the
instructions for submitting comments
on Docket No. FWS-R2-ES-2020-0040.

- *U.S.:* Public Comments Processing;
Attn: Docket No. FWS-R2-ES-2019-
0040; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Headquarters, MS: PRB/3W; 5275
Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, VA 22041-
3803.

For additional information about
submitting comments, see Request for
Public Comments and Public
Availability of Comments under

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Shawn Sartorius, Field Supervisor, New
Mexico Ecological Services Field Office,

by phone at 505-761-4781, by email at
nmesfo@fws.gov, or via the Federal
Relay Service at 800-877-8339 for TTY
service.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: We, the
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service),
announce the availability of our draft
revised recovery plan for the Gila trout
(*Oncorhynchus gilae*), listed as
threatened under the Endangered
Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA;
16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*). Gila trout are
endemic to mountain streams in the
Gila, San Francisco, Agua Fria, and
Verde River drainages in New Mexico
and Arizona. The draft revised recovery
plan includes site-specific management
actions and objective, measurable
criteria that, when met, will enable us
to remove the Gila trout from the list of
endangered and threatened wildlife. We
request review and comment on this
plan from local, State, and Federal
agencies; Tribes; and the public. We
will also accept any new information on
the status of the Gila trout throughout
its range to assist in finalizing the
recovery plan.

Background

Recovery of endangered or threatened
animals and plants to the point where
they are again secure, self-sustaining
members of their ecosystems is a
primary goal of our endangered species
program and the ESA. Recovery means
improvement of the status of listed
species to the point at which listing is
no longer appropriate under the criteria
set out in section 4(a)(1) of the ESA. The
ESA requires the development of
recovery plans for listed species, unless
such a plan would not promote the
conservation of a particular species. The
Service approved the original recovery
plan for the Gila trout on January 12,
1979 (Service 1979), with subsequent
revisions approved on January 3, 1984
(Service 1984), December 8, 1993
(Service 1993), and August 19, 2003
(Service 2003).

This draft revised recovery plan for
the Gila trout represents the fourth
revision and considers updated
information on genetics, population
status, and threats (principally wildfire
effects and hybridization) in the
development of revised recovery
objectives, criteria, and actions. We
used a streamlined approach to recovery
planning and implementation for the
Gila trout by preparing separate
recovery plan and recovery
implementation strategy documents.
The information in the draft recovery
plan provides the biological
background, a threats assessment, a
strategy for recovery of the Gila trout,

quantitative delisting criteria, a list of
prioritized recovery actions, and the
estimated time and cost to recovery
(Service 2020a). The separate recovery
implementation strategy document
further describes in detail the specific
activities needed to implement the
recovery actions (Service 2020b).

Summary of Species Information

Gila trout are endemic to mountain
streams within the Gila, San Francisco,
Agua Fria, and Verde River drainages in
New Mexico and Arizona. Although
Gila trout were documented to occur in
the upper Gila River basin since at least
1885, the species was not described
until 1950, by which time its
distribution had been dramatically
reduced. On March 11, 1967, we listed
the Gila trout as endangered under the
Federal Endangered Species
Preservation Act of 1966 (32 FR 4001).
The Gila trout's endangered status was
continued under the Endangered
Species Act of 1973, and we reclassified
it as a threatened species on July 18,
2006, with a special rule under section
4(d) of the ESA (71 FR 40657).

Gila trout are readily identified by
their iridescent gold sides, which blend
to a darker shade of copper on the
opercles (bony plates surrounding the
gills). Spots on the body are small and
profuse, generally occurring above the
lateral line and extending onto the head,
dorsal fin, and caudal fin. These spots
are irregularly shaped on the sides and
increase in size dorsally. A few
scattered spots are sometimes present
on the anal fin, and the adipose fin is
typically large and well spotted. Dorsal,
pelvic, and anal fins have a white to
yellowish tip that may extend along the
leading edge of the pelvic fins. A yellow
cutthroat mark is present on most
mature specimens. Parr marks (vertical
bars present when trout are less than a
year old) are commonly retained by
adults, and a faint, salmon-pink band is
also present on adults, particularly
during spawning season, when the
normally white belly may be streaked
with yellow or reddish orange.
Spawning of Gila trout occurs mainly in
April and begins when water
temperatures reach about 8 °C (46 °F),
but day length may also be an important
cue. Gila trout fry [20 to 25 millimeters
(mm), or 0.8 to 1.0 inches (in) total
length] emerge in 56 to 70 days. Females
reach maturity between two to four
years after hatching, and males typically
reach maturity at two or three years.
Most individuals are mature at a length
of 150 mm (6 in) or greater, and live five
years. Thus, the majority of adult female
Gila trout spawn only twice before

dying, and most adult males only spawn three or four times before dying.

Gila trout require perennial streamflow and coldwater aquatic habitats with unimpaired water quality to maintain persistent, viable populations. Flow regimes vary depending on the site-specific characteristics of stream reaches (e.g., stream gradient, seepage, substrate composition, channel dimensions, and watershed hydrology). Suitable water temperature regimes are characterized by maximum water temperatures that do not exceed approximately 20 °C (68 °F) for six or more consecutive hours in a 24-hour period on more than three consecutive days, and maximum temperature that do not exceed 24 °C (77 °F). Suitable water quality for Gila trout is characterized by high dissolved oxygen concentration, low turbidity and conductivity, low levels of total dissolved solids, near-neutral pH, and low conductivity. In addition to perennial stream flow and suitable water temperature and water quality, Gila trout require a diversity of habitats sufficient to sustain all life stages of the species (*i.e.*, eggs, fry, juveniles, and adults). This includes suitable spawning habitat, habitat where fry can find shelter and food, and areas suitable for occupancy by juvenile and adult Gila trout. Sufficient pool habitat and spawning habitat are likely the two most important habitat features with respect to Gila trout population persistence.

Fragmentation of the historical distribution of Gila trout has resulted in several populations confined to small, isolated habitats throughout the range of the species. Collections from streams in the upper Gila River Basin and San Francisco River Basin, along with genetic analyses, indicate that five lineages of Gila trout exist: Main Diamond Creek, South Diamond Creek, Whiskey Creek, Spruce Creek, and Iron Creek. The distribution of these lineages has fluctuated since 1975, when only five remnant populations (*i.e.*, a self-sustaining group of Gila trout inhabiting a single stream) were known. Currently, there are 17 extant populations of Gila trout inhabiting approximately 137.5 km (85.2 mi) of stream habitat. These include five populations of the Main Diamond Creek lineage, four populations of the South Diamond Creek lineage, three populations of the Whiskey Creek lineage, two populations of the Spruce Creek lineage, two populations of the Iron Creek lineage, and one population (Dude Creek), which is considered a mixed-lineage population (*i.e.*, a stream or metapopulation that contains multiple lineages of Gila trout, instead of a single

lineage). Recently, the Spruce Creek and Whiskey Creek lineages each lost a population following large-scale, high-severity wildfires in 2011 and 2012, respectively.

For Gila trout to be able to sustain populations in the wild over time (viability), the species requires combinations of sufficiently large, healthy populations that, where possible, have connectivity to dendritic stream networks to maintain adequate population sizes and genetic variation. Dendritic stream networks provide Gila trout with access to suitable habitat enabling the species to respond to changes in their biological and physical environment (representation), environmental stochasticity (resiliency), and catastrophic events (redundancy). Few, if any, extant populations of Gila trout are large enough to survive extremes in environmental conditions, and the existing genetic diversity of the species is limited to five remnant lineages. Recovery actions implemented to date have increased the number of populations of Gila trout; however, the spatial distribution of populations is constrained by the patchy distribution and geographic isolation of cold-water streams, many of which are single-stream systems that are relatively small. Significant factors affecting the viability of Gila trout include habitat loss and fragmentation (Factor A) that result from large-scale, high-severity wildfire and the effects of climate change; unregulated angling (Factor B); predation and competition from nonnative fish that are naturalized throughout the Gila trout's historical range (Factor C); and hybridization with rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) and small, isolated population sizes (Factor E).

Recovery Plan Goals

The objective of a recovery plan is to provide a framework for the recovery of a species so that protection under the ESA is no longer necessary. A recovery plan includes scientific information about the species and provides criteria and actions necessary for us to be able to reclassify the species to threatened status or remove it from the lists of endangered and threatened wildlife and plants. Recovery plans help guide our recovery efforts by describing actions we consider necessary for the species' conservation, and by estimating time and costs for implementing needed recovery measures.

In this revised recovery plan, we transition from a strategy of crisis-management focused on preventing extinction to an approach of establishing sustainable populations

throughout the historical range of the Gila trout, populations that contain the breadth of genetic diversity of the species. The recovery strategy for the Gila trout will entail incremental replacement of nonnative salmonids with Gila trout in suitable habitat throughout a significant portion of the historical range of the species. This strategy will be implemented by conducting actions to substantially improve redundancy, representation, and resiliency to the point that the species is no longer at risk for extinction and may be delisted. Recovery objectives include securing the existing genetic diversity of Gila trout, increasing the geographic distribution of the species, and increasing the size, dendritic population structure, and interconnectedness of populations. The revised recovery plan provides recovery criteria aimed at managing or eliminating threats to meet the goal of delisting the species. These recovery criteria are based on the area of occupied habitat within the Gila trout's presumed historical range, the conservation of genetically distinct Gila trout lineages, the establishment of dendritic metapopulations, and the absence and management of nonnative salmonids within Gila trout habitat. The site-specific management actions needed to address the threats to Gila trout viability and achieve the recovery criteria involve: (1) Repatriation of Gila trout to streams within its presumed historical range; (2) establishment and maintenance of captive propagation and hatchery facilities; (3) management of nonnative salmonids; (4) monitoring of Gila trout populations; (5) conducting public education and outreach; and (6) developing and implementing regulations to maintain sustainable Gila trout populations in streams open to sport fishing.

Request for Public Comments

Section 4(f) of the ESA requires us to provide public notice and an opportunity for public review and comment during recovery plan development. It is also our policy to request peer review of recovery plans (July 1, 1994; 59 FR 34270). In an appendix to the approved recovery plan, we will summarize and respond to the issues raised by the public and peer reviewers. Substantive comments may or may not result in changes to the recovery plan; comments regarding recovery plan implementation will be forwarded as appropriate to Federal or other entities so that they can be taken into account during the course of implementing recovery actions. Responses to individual commenters

will not be provided, but we will provide a summary of how we addressed substantive comments in an appendix to the approved recovery plan.

We invite written comments on the draft recovery plan. In particular, we are interested in additional information regarding the current threats to the species and the implementation of the recommended recovery actions.

Public Availability of Comments

All comments received, including names and addresses, will become part of the administrative record and will be available to the public. Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available. If you submit a hardcopy comment that includes personal identifying information, you may request at the top of your document that we withhold this information from public review. However, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Authority

We developed our draft recovery plan and publish this notice under the authority of section 4(f) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

Amy L. Lueders,

Regional Director, Southwest Region, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

[FWS-HQ-WSFR-2021-N161;
FF09W25000-212-FXGO166409WSFR0;
OMB Control Number 1018-0100]

Agency Information Collection Activities; Submission to the Office of Management and Budget for Review and Approval; Administrative Procedures for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Financial Assistance Programs

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of information collection; request for comment.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, we, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, are proposing to renew an information collection with revisions.

DATES: Interested persons are invited to submit comments on or before August 11, 2021.

ADDRESSES: Written comments and recommendations for the proposed information collection should be sent within 30 days of publication of this notice to www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAMain. Find this particular information collection by selecting “Currently under Review—Open for Public Comments” or by using the search function. Please provide a copy of your comments to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, MS: PRB (JAO/3W), 5275 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, VA 22041-3803 (mail); or by email to Info_Coll@fws.gov. Please reference OMB Control Number 1018-0100 in the subject line of your comments.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Madonna L. Baucum, Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, by email at Info_Coll@fws.gov, or by telephone at (703) 358-2503. Individuals who are hearing or speech impaired may call the Federal Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339 for TTY assistance. You may also view the information collection request (ICR) at <http://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAMain>.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (PRA, 44 U.S.C. 3501 *et seq.*) and 5 CFR 1320.8(d)(1), we provide the general public and other Federal agencies with an opportunity to comment on new, proposed, revised, and continuing collections of information. This helps us assess the impact of our information collection requirements and minimize the public’s reporting burden. It also helps the public understand our information collection requirements and provide the requested data in the desired format.

On October 9, 2020, we published in the *Federal Register* (85 FR 64158) a notice of our intent to request that OMB approve this information collection. In that notice, we solicited comments for 60 days, ending on December 8, 2020. We received one comment in response to the notice that did not address the information collection requirements. The commenter expressed general concerns about lack of transparency in Federal financial assistance funding, specifically funding awarded to a State fish and game agency and foreign assistance. The Service complies with all Federal financial assistance public transparency requirements. Data on all Service financial assistance programs are available at <https://beta.sam.gov/>.

Data on all Service award actions are available at <https://www.usaspending.gov/>. Data on the Service’s foreign assistance authorities and activities are available at <https://www.foreignassistance.gov/>. The Service also issues press releases for a wide variety of financial assistance programs. The Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program routinely issues press releases for the mandatory formula grants to States awarded under the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act and the Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Act. The public can access Service press release archives at <https://www.fws.gov/news/>.

As part of our continuing effort to reduce paperwork and respondent burdens, we are again soliciting comments from the public and other Federal agencies on the proposed ICR that is described below. We are especially interested in public comment addressing the following:

- (1) Whether or not the collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether or not the information will have practical utility;
- (2) The accuracy of our estimate of the burden for this collection of information, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used;
- (3) Ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and
- (4) How might the agency minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, including through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology, *e.g.*, permitting electronic submission of response.

Comments that you submit in response to this notice are a matter of public record. Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Abstract: We issue financial assistance through grants and cooperative agreement awards to individuals; commercial organizations; institutions of higher education; nonprofit organizations; foreign entities; and State, local, and Tribal governments. The Service administers a