



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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April 7, 2020

Dear Interested Party:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is responsible for identifying those species that are in need of protection under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (Act). The Service will be making a determination on whether two species of freshwater mussels (Mexican fawnsfoot and Salina mucket) warrant protections under the Act. These freshwater mussels are endemic to western Texas in the Rio Grande and Pecos river basin. Additional information about each of these species can be found online at: <https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/>.

The Mexican fawnsfoot (*Truncilla congata*) and Salina mucket (*Potamilus metnecktayi*) are petitioned species with a positive 90-day finding under the Act (74FR66260). The Service is required to conduct a status review and complete a 12-month finding to determine whether or not listing under the Act is warranted.

With this letter, we are providing early notification to interested parties that we are analyzing the best scientific and commercial data available on the Mexican fawnsfoot and Salina mucket. While we determine if listing is warranted by evaluating information on status and threats, we are also interested in learning about proactive efforts to conserve these species and their habitats, and to remove threats. If listing is warranted, we will then consider what areas we may include in a proposed critical habitat designation. We are seeking your input to ensure that we have the best available scientific information to help us determine conservation needs and opportunities, and inform our decision.

At this time, we are seeking any updated information and data related to the status of and threats to the two freshwater mussel species, and efforts to conserve them. Information of particular interest to the Service includes the following:

- the current and historical distribution, abundance, and density of populations, including survey information and long-term or projected population trends;
- ongoing and potential factors that may be threatening the species including: the present or threatened destruction, modification, or curtailment of habitat or range; overutilization for commercial, recreational, scientific, or educational purposes; disease or predation; the inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms; and other natural or manmade factors affecting its continued existence, and,
- past and current conservation efforts that may benefit these species.

In addition, we are seeking scientific data to assist in considering possible proposed critical habitat designations, if necessary. Specifically, we are seeking information related to, and for each of the two species:

- habitat selection, use, and any changes or trends in the amount and distribution of habitat used by the species;

- habitat requirements for feeding, breeding, and sheltering, including particular physical or biological features that are essential to the conservation of the species;
- where such physical or biological features are found and what special management considerations or protection these features may require;
- why any specific areas outside the geographical area occupied by the species may be essential to the conservation of the species; and
- benefits and impacts of designating any specific area as critical habitat.

Please find additional information on the listing process online at <http://www.fws.gov/angered/what-we-do/listing-overview.html> and information about critical habitat at <http://www.fws.gov/angered/what-we-do/critical-habitats.html>. Additional information about each of these species, and information about previous Federal actions, can be found at: <https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/> by searching the species name.

While we will accept new information throughout this process, we respectfully request that you provide any pertinent information to us by **June 1st, 2020** to ensure that we have time to consider it while preparing the determinations. Information should be sent to Gary Pandolfi, Freshwater Mussel Biologist, Austin Ecological Services Field Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 10711 Burnet Road, Suite 200, Austin, TX 78758 or gary_pandolfi@fws.gov. All data and information submitted to us, including names and addresses, will become part of the administrative record and available for public inspection.

If you would like additional information or have any questions about the determination process, please contact Gary Pandolfi at gary_pandolfi@fws.gov. We appreciate your assistance in making sure we have the best available scientific information on these species.

Sincerely,

/s/ Adam Zerrenner

Adam Zerrenner
Field Supervisor