

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

news release

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STATUS OF SEVEN ENDANGERED MOLLUSC SPECIES TO BE REVIEWED

The status of seven southeastern species of molluscs now listed as endangered will be reviewed by the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to determine if they should be reclassified.

The species to be reviewed are the yellow-blossom pearly mussel (Epioblasma (=Dysnomia) florentina florentina); the orange-footed pearly mussel (Plethobasis cooperianus); the pale lilliput pearly mussel (Toxolasma cylindrella); the turgid blossom pearly mussel (Epioblasma (=Dysnomia) turgidula); the birdwing pearly mussel (Conradilla caelata); the tan riffle shell mussel (Epioblasma walkeri); and the Cumberland monkeyface pearly mussel (Quadrula intermedia). The mussels are found in the Clinch, Duck, Elk, Middle Fork Holston, Paint Rock, Powell, Red, and Tennessee Rivers in Alabama, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Virginia.

The Service is seeking views and information from the Governors of these States on the status of the species in their jurisdictions. Other interested parties are invited to submit factual information, especially publications and written reports, that pertains to the status of any of these species.

The Fish and Wildlife Service will study all information submitted and determine whether the mussels should remain listed as endangered, be reclassified to "threatened" status (a less dire category), or be removed from the U.S. List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants. A species could be removed either if it is found not to be in danger of extinction or if it has become extinct.

The mussels were listed as endangered in 1976 and 1977 because their numbers had declined primarily as a result of destruction and modification of their habitat. Some of the species were formerly widespread and are now restricted to limited areas. Questions have been raised as to the present distribution of the mussels in these river systems.

The seven mussels have been the subject of some controversy because they exist in the area to be impounded by the Tennessee Valley Authority's (TVA) Columbia Dam project on the Duck River in Tennessee. The Fish and Wildlife Service consulted with TVA under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act and found that the dam could jeopardize the survival of endangered mussels in the river. TVA recently developed alternative proposals for the project, and the Service and TVA will conduct a new consultation on the alternatives.

The notice of the status review was published in the May 1, 1979, Federal Register. Interested parties should submit information to the Director (OES), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240, by June 28, 1979.

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