

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

Notice of Availability of a Technical/ Agency Draft Recovery Plan for Endangered Fat Threeridge (*Amblema neislerii*), Shinyrayed Pocketbook (*Lampsilis subangulata*), Gulf Moccasinshell (*Medionidus penicillatus*), Ochlockonee Moccasinshell (*Medionidus simpsonianus*), Oval Pigtoe (*Pleurobema pyriforme*) and Threatened Chipola Slabshell (*Elliptio chipolaensis*), and Purple Bankclimber (*Elliptoideus sloatianus*) for Review and Comment

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of document availability and public comment period.

SUMMARY: We, the Fish and Wildlife Service, announce the availability for public review of the technical/agency draft recovery plan for endangered fat threeridge (*Amblema neislerii*), shinyrayed pocketbook (*Lampsilis subangulata*), Gulf moccasinshell (*Medionidus penicillatus*), Ochlockonee moccasinshell (*Medionidus simpsonianus*), oval pigtoe (*Pleurobema pyriforme*) and threatened Chipola slabshell (*Elliptio chipolaensis*), and purple bankclimber (*Elliptoideus sloatianus*). These mussels are endemic to eastern Gulf Slope streams draining the Apalachicola Region of southeast Alabama, southwest Georgia, and north Florida. Their center of distribution is the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint (ACF) River basin of southeast Alabama, southwest Georgia, and northwest Florida. They are currently known from restricted portions of from one to four independent river systems. These species inhabit stable sandy and gravelly substrates in medium-sized streams to large rivers, often in areas swept free of silt by the current. The abundance and distributions of the seven mussel species decreased historically from habitat loss associated with reservoir construction, channel construction and maintenance, and erosion. These habitat changes have resulted in significant extirpations (localized loss of populations), restricted and fragmented distributions, and poor recruitment of young. We solicit review and comment from the public on this draft plan.

DATES: We must receive comments on the draft recovery plan on or before November 15, 1999 to receive consideration by us.

ADDRESSES: You may obtain a copy of the draft recovery plan by contacting the

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Panama City Field Office, 1612 June Avenue, Panama City, Florida 32405 (telephone 850/769-0552). Send written comments and materials regarding the plan to the Project Leader at the above address. Comments and materials received are available on request for public inspection, by appointment, during normal business hours at the above address.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ms. Gail A. Carmody at the above address and telephone number (extension 225).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**Background**

Restoring endangered or threatened animals or plants to the point where they are again secure, self-sustaining members of their ecosystems is a primary goal of our endangered species program. To help guide the recovery effort, we are working to prepare recovery plans for most of the listed species native to the United States. Recovery plans describe actions considered necessary for conservation of the species, establish criteria for recognizing the recovery levels for downlisting or delisting them, and estimate time and cost for implementing the recovery measures needed.

The Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*) (Act), requires the development of recovery plans for listed species unless such a plan would not promote the conservation of a particular species. Section 4(f) of the Act, as amended in 1988, requires that a public notice and an opportunity for public review and comment be provided during recovery plan development. We will consider all information presented during a public comment period prior to approval of each new or revised recovery plan. We and other Federal agencies will also take these comments into account in the course of implementing approved recovery plans.

Despite intensive research and management efforts, the survival of these mussels is still perilous. Based upon available information concerning their range, biology, and threats to their continued survival, it is not yet possible to determine if or when full recovery of these species is possible. This draft recovery plan outlines a mechanism that provides for the protection, maintenance, and enhancement of the only known wild populations and the establishment of new wild populations in the future. We officially determined endangered status for five freshwater mussels, and threatened status for two freshwater mussels from eastern Gulf

Slope drainage of Alabama, Florida, and Georgia in Final rule of **Federal Register** 63(50):12664-12687. The eastern Gulf Slope streams draining the Apalachicola Region are defined as streams from the Escambia to the Suwannee River systems. Occurring in southeast Alabama, southwest Georgia, and north Florida, they collectively form one of the largest drainage areas in the eastern Gulf Coastal Plain. Historically, these rivers were known for their rich freshwater mussel populations. However, listed mussel species have undergone significant reduction in total range and abundance. We will use comments and information provided during this review in preparing the final recovery plan.

Public Comments Solicited

We solicit written comments on the recovery plan described. We will consider all comments received by the date specified above prior to approval of the plan.

Authority: The authority for this action is section 4(f) of the Endangered Species Act, 16 U.S.C. 1533(f).

Dated: September 10, 1999.

Gail A. Carmody,
Project Leader.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[WO-260-1060-00-24 1A]

Call for Nominations for the Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board call for nominations.

SUMMARY: The purpose of this notice is to solicit public nominations for the Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board. The Board provides advice concerning management, protection, and control of wild free-roaming horses and burros on the public lands administered by the Department of the Interior, through the Bureau of Land Management, and the Department of Agriculture, through the Forest Service.

DATES: Nominations should be submitted to the address listed below under **ADDRESSES** no later than November 1, 1999.

ADDRESSES: Wild Horse and Burro Group, WO 260, Bureau of Land Management, Department of the Interior, 1849 "C" St., Mail Stop: 306 LS, Washington, DC 20240.