

Department of the Interior
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Klamath Falls FWO
1936 California Avenue
Klamath Falls, Oregon 97601
Phone: (541) 885-8481
Fax: (541) 885-7837
<http://www.fws.gov/klamathfallsfwo/>

News Release



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Contact: Matt Baun (530) 841-3119

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE DESIGNATES CRITICAL HABITAT FOR KLAMATH BASIN SUCKERS

KLAMATH FALLS, ORE., --The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today announced that it has designated critical habitat for the endangered Lost River sucker and shortnose sucker. Critical habitat was first proposed for these species in 1994, but was never completed due to higher conservation priorities for the listed suckers.

Approximately 282 miles of streams, and 241,438 acres of lakes and reservoirs are included in the final critical habitat designation in Klamath and Lake Counties in Oregon, and in Modoc County, California. The final rule and related materials, including maps, are available at www.fws.gov/klamathfallsfwo.

Critical habitat designation does not impose restrictions on private lands, unless they involve Federal funds, permits, or activities. Critical habitat is a tool to identify areas that are important to the recovery of a listed species. Designation of critical habitat can help focus conservation activities for a listed species by identifying areas that contain the physical and biological features that are essential for the conservation of the species.

In the final rule, the Service is not designating ditches or canal systems where these species may occur because these areas do not provide the physical and biological features essential to the conservation of these species.

The final critical habitat designation includes significantly less area than what was proposed in 1994 mostly because of modern mapping tools and methods. A summary table of the differences for Lost River sucker and shortnose sucker is below:

	1994 Proposal	2012 Final Rule
Total:	880,000 acres	241,438 acres, 282 miles
Lost River suckers	424,000 acres	117,848 acres, 146 miles
Shortnose suckers	456,000 acres	123,590 acres, 136 miles

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FAQs about Critical Habitat Lost River and Shortnose Suckers

What is critical habitat?

Critical habitat is a term used in the Endangered Species Act to refer to specific geographic areas that are essential for the conservation of a threatened or endangered species and that may require special management considerations.

What is the purpose of designating critical habitat?

The purpose of designating critical habitat is to require Federal agencies to consider the effects of actions they carry out, fund, or authorize on habitat that is essential to the conservation of a listed species.

What are the benefits of a critical habitat designation?

Designation of critical habitat can help focus conservation activities for a listed species by identifying areas that contain the physical and biological features that are essential for the conservation of the species. A critical habitat designation alerts the public as well as land managing agencies to the importance of these areas, but the Act only imposes restrictions on the actions or programs that are authorized, funded, permitted, or carried out by a federal agency that may adversely modify critical habitat.

Can you give examples of federally funded or permitted activities that could trigger adverse modification to critical habitat on private lands in the Upper Basin?

Currently in the Upper Klamath Basin, there are not a lot of development activities or activities that would significantly modify the landscape like the irrigation project did 100 years ago. Our experience has shown that it is rare that private landowners conduct activities on their property that involve federal funding or requires a federal permit. The exception is the federally funded habitat restoration projects that landowners have been voluntarily participating in with Federal agencies like the Service. In the past, the Klamath Falls FWO has consulted on U.S. Department of Agriculture National Resource Conservation Service funded projects, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service projects, and a few Army Corps of Engineer permitted projects.

What happens if there is a federally funded or permitted activity within critical habitat on private land?

The federal agency responsible for the funding or permitting will need to consult on the proposed action with the Service. In most cases, adverse effects to critical habitat are reduced or eliminated during the planning phase of the project. If there are proposed actions that will likely have adverse impacts on critical habitat, then specific actions are required of the landowner to avoid or minimize the effect. Since critical habitat was proposed in 1994, no projects occurring in these areas have been significantly modified or halted during this time period.

Would a critical habitat designation prohibit boating, fishing, and other recreational uses of lakes, reservoirs, and streams in the Klamath Basin?

No. A designation of critical habitat will not restrict or prohibit landowners and other people from accessing rivers, lakes, or reservoir areas for recreational and other activities. However, since the species was listed in 1988, suckers have been protected from "take" (defined as to kill, harm, harass, trap, or wound) under the Endangered Species Act.

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How does the Service determine what areas to designate for the listed fish?

The Service considers physical and biological habitat features essential to the conservation of the species. These include: space for individual and population growth cover or shelter; food, water, or other nutritional requirements; sites for spawning and rearing offspring; habitats that are protected from disturbance, and areas that represent the historic geographical range of a species.

Does the Act require an economic analysis as part of a critical habitat designation?

Yes. The Service must take into account the economic impact of specifying any particular area as critical habitat. The Service may exclude any area from designation if it determines that the benefits of such exclusion outweigh the benefits of designation, unless it determines that failure to designate the area as critical habitat will result in the extinction of the species. The economic analysis did not identify any disproportionate costs that are likely to result from the designation and therefore, did not exclude any areas from designation.

How can I get more information concerning critical habitat in the Klamath Basin for the suckers?

For more information specific to proposed habitat in the Klamath Basin you may contact Laurie Sada or Nolan Banish in the Klamath Falls Fish and Wildlife Office at (541) 885-8481.