



STATUS REVIEW OF SHORNOSE STURGEON POPULATIONS QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

Q – What action is NOAA Fisheries Service undertaking?

A – NOAA Fisheries Service has initiated a status review of shortnose sturgeon (*Acipenser brevirostrum*). A status review is an analysis of a species' biological status, which is conducted to ensure that the original classification of a species as threatened or endangered on the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants (50 CFR 17.11 – 17.12) remains appropriate.

This review will consider the best scientific and commercial information available for the shortnose sturgeon. We are soliciting information relevant to the status of, and factors and threats affecting, the species, including, but not limited to, information on the following topics:

- River-specific historical and current abundance and distribution of the species throughout its range;
- Potential factors affecting the species' current status and past or ongoing decline throughout its range by river;
- Rates of capture and release of the species from both recreational and commercial fisheries;
- Life history information (size/age at maturity, growth rates, fecundity, reproductive rate/success, preferred prey, etc.);
- Essential physical and biological habitat features;
- Molecular information to assist in determining within-species genetic structure and distinctiveness;
- Factors and threats affecting the species' status, particularly:
 - Present or threatened destruction, modification, or curtailment of habitat or range;
 - Over-utilization for commercial, recreational, scientific, or educational purposes;
 - Disease or predation;
 - Inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms; or
 - Other natural or manmade factors affecting its continued existence; and
- Any ongoing conservation efforts for the species.

Q – Who is responsible for conducting a status review?

A – The Secretary of Commerce and the Secretary of the Interior are ultimately responsible for conducting status reviews of listed species. NOAA Fisheries Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have been delegated authority for species under their jurisdiction. Shortnose sturgeon are under NOAA Fisheries Service's jurisdiction.

Q – Why is NOAA Fisheries Service doing a status review for the shortnose sturgeon now?

A – The shortnose sturgeon was initially listed as an ‘endangered species threatened with extinction’ under the Endangered Species Preservation Act on March 11, 1967. Shortnose sturgeon remained on the endangered species list with the enactment of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in 1973. The species’ status was last examined in 1987. However, the status review was never finalized. NOAA Fisheries Service published a final recovery plan for the shortnose sturgeon in 1998. Since then, research and monitoring programs and conservation actions by Federal, state and private entities have been ongoing. As a result, new information is available. Although NOAA Fisheries Service has continued to use the best available data in accordance with the ESA, these new data have not been fully evaluated in a status review.

Q – What will the status review entail?

A – The review will consider information that has become available since the 1998 Final Recovery Plan (http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/pdfs/recovery/sturgeon_shortnose.pdf). Information examined in the review will include population structure and trend data; effects of threats on long-term survival; adequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms and conservation measures; and management and conservation planning information. The review also will assess: a) whether new information suggests that the species’ population is increasing, declining, or stable; b) whether existing threats are increasing, the same, reduced, or eliminated; c) if there are any new threats; and d) if any new information or analysis calls into question any of the conclusions in the original listing determination as to the species’ classification.

Q – Does the review process lessen protections for the shortnose sturgeon?

A – No. All of the existing protections for shortnose sturgeon remain in place while the status review is in progress. After reviewing the information in the status review report, NOAA Fisheries Service may determine that changes in shortnose sturgeon’s listing status are warranted. Changes in listing status would only be made after a formal rule-making process that includes public review and comment.

Q – When will the status review be completed?

A – The review is expected to be completed in 2009.

Q – How do I provide information or comments to assist in the review?

A – Please visit the following web pages and follow instructions in the *Federal Register* Notice for submitting public comment. The comment period expires on March 31, 2008. <http://www.epa.gov/fedrgstr/EPA-SPECIES/2007/November/Day-30/e23258.htm>
<http://www.epa.gov/fedrgstr/EPA-SPECIES/2008/January/Day-29/e1562.htm>