

Species		Historic range	Vertebrate population where endangered or threatened	Status	When listed	Critical habitat	Special rules
Common name	Scientific name						
*	*	*	*	*	*		*
CRUSTACEANS							
*	*	*	*	*	*		*
Amphipod, Kauai cave	<i>Spelaeorchestia koloana</i> .	U.S.A. (HI)	NA	E
*	*	*	*	*	*		*

Dated: November 3, 1997.

John G. Rogers,

Acting Director, Fish and Wildlife Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

50 CFR Part 23

Listing of all Sturgeon and Paddlefish Species and Their Products in the Appendices to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and its Implementation by the United States; Public Meetings

AGENCY: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of public meetings.

SUMMARY: With this notice the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) announces 2 public meetings to discuss the implementation of the listing of all sturgeon and paddlefish, and their products in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). This listing decision was reached at the Tenth Conference of the CITES Parties (COP10) which was held in June of 1997. The listing becomes effective April 1, 1998. With the listing of all sturgeon and paddlefish species in CITES, this fishery product is now covered by the Service's regulations regarding import or export of wildlife. The focus of the meeting will be on aspects of importation of caviar and other sturgeon products into the United States.

DATES: A public meeting in New York City, NY will be held on January 17, 1998, from 8:00 am-12:00 noon, and a public meeting in Los Angeles, CA will be held on January 27, 1998, from 8:00 am-12:00 noon.

ADDRESSES: The public meeting in New York City will be held at St. John's

University, Bent Hall Seminar Room, 8000 Utopia Parkway, Jamaica, NY 11439. The public meeting in Los Angeles will be held at The Westin (Los Angeles Airport) Hotel, 5400 West Century Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90045. Please note that the rooms for these meetings are accessible to the handicapped.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. Rosemarie Gnam, Office of Management Authority, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, telephone (703) 358-2095, fax (703) 358-2298.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, hereinafter referred to as CITES or the Convention, is an international treaty designed to control international trade in certain animal and plant species which are or may become threatened with extinction, and are listed in Appendices to the Convention. Currently, 143 countries, including the United States, are CITES Parties.

The Service is the lead agency for the implementation of CITES. As such, we are responsible for implementing recent decisions from the Tenth Conference of the Parties (COP10) which was held this past June in Zimbabwe. Among the decisions made at COP10, was to include all unlisted species of sturgeon and paddlefish in Appendix II of CITES. This listing becomes effective April 1, 1998 (see 62 FR 44627).

The order, Acipenseriformes, are a primitive group of approximately 27 species of fish, whose biological attributes make them vulnerable to intensive fishing pressure or other agents of elevated adult mortality. Although females produce large quantities of eggs, juvenile mortality is high; sturgeons are generally long-lived and slow to mature (reaching sexual maturity at 6-25 years); and depend on large rivers to spawn. Sturgeons are fished for meat and caviar, with caviar being the most valuable product and in

highest demand in international trade. Many species of sturgeons, the primary source of commercial caviar, have experienced severe population declines worldwide because of both habitat destruction and excessive take for international trade. Some are at serious risk of extinction.

Sturgeons of the Caspian Sea produce what is claimed to be the highest quality caviar and are the source of more than 90% of the world caviar trade. Russia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Iran now supply most of the caviar from the Caspian Sea. Since the mid-1970's very marked declines in the populations of all six of the Caspian Sea's sturgeon species have been noted, especially Beluga (*Huso huso*), Russian (*Acipenser gueldenstaedtii*), and stellate (*A. stellatus*) sturgeons. Five of the six species of Caspian Sea sturgeons are considered endangered by IUCN (the World Conservation Union). The problem has become exacerbated in recent years due to deteriorating fishery management and enforcement capabilities in the region, resulting in significant levels of poaching and illegal trade. The total present take is believed to far exceed sustainable levels.

In an effort to curtail the trade in illegally obtained [poached] caviar, and to ensure sustainable use and management of wild sturgeon, particularly those of the Caspian Sea, sturgeon were considered for listing in CITES. These concerns led to the development of the CITES listing proposal by Germany to include all presently unlisted species of sturgeons in Appendix II. CITES could provide a regulatory mechanism for import and export that could curtail the illegal caviar trade and reduce threat to the wild populations. The United States, both as a sturgeon range state and major importer of Caspian Sea caviar, agreed to co-sponsor the CITES listing proposal with Germany.

At COP10 held in Zimbabwe, this past June, the proposal to include all unlisted sturgeon species in CITES was adopted by consensus. Prior to COP10,

Short nosed sturgeon (*A. brevirostrum*) and Baltic sturgeon (*A. sturio*) were listed in CITES Appendix I and Atlantic sturgeon (*A. oxyrinchus*) and American paddlefish (*Polydon spathula*) were listed in CITES Appendix II. Five of the newly listed species were listed in Appendix II because of their population status and trade levels: Beluga, Russian, stellate, Siberian (*A. baerii*), and ship or spiny (*A. nudiiventris*) sturgeons. All other species of sturgeons not already listed in CITES before COP10 were included in Appendix II because of the similarity of appearance of their caviar to that of the Caspian Sea species. This includes the white sturgeon (*A. transmontanus*) from North America. The end result is that all sturgeon and paddlefish species worldwide, are now covered under the provisions of CITES.

The listing of sturgeon will provide a regulatory mechanism for the import and export of sturgeon and their products, thereby curtailing the illegal caviar trade and detriment to the wild populations, notably those of the

Caspian Sea. It will ensure sustainable use and management of wild sturgeon stocks.

With the listing of all sturgeon and paddlefish species in CITES at COP10, this fishery product is now covered by the Service's regulations regarding import or export of wildlife. All sturgeon species, their parts and products, including meat and caviar, will have to be declared to the Service upon import or export, as well as meet applicable permit, port and licensing requirements.

These public meetings will provide an opportunity for the Service to meet with importers and exporters of sturgeon and their products, notably caviar, Customs brokers and other interested persons on the CITES listing. The Service will explain the wildlife regulations which will now affect sturgeon imports and exports, and how these requirements will be implemented. Given that the United States is the largest importer of caviar from the Caspian Sea region, focus of the meeting will primarily be on imports of caviar products, notably

from Russia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and others.

The public meetings will be held in New York City and Los Angeles because of the high volume of caviar imports through these ports, and the corresponding concentration of affected members of the general public.

The Service has prepared a fact sheet, "Sturgeons and CITES" to help answer questions on the listing and its implementation. It is available from the Office of Management Authority upon request. Written requests should be sent to: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Management Authority, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, room 700, Arlington VA 22203.

Author: This notice was prepared by Dr. Rosemarie Gnam, Office of Management Authority, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Dated: November 25, 1997.

Jamie Rappaport Clark,

Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

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