

USFWS Presents 90-Day Finding on Petition to List the Lake Sturgeon



Lake Sturgeon

[Source: New York State Dept. of Environmental Conservation](#)

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) released a 90-day finding on August 15, 2019, in response to a petition to federally list the Lake Sturgeon (*Acipenser fulvescens*) under the Endangered Species Act. This fish species occurs across the temperate zone freshwater systems of North America, from the Great Lakes through the Mississippi River drainage area. Although historically abundant throughout their range, the lake sturgeon has significantly declined over the past two centuries, with several states listing the fish as a species of concern, threatened, or as endangered.

Characteristics of the Lake

Sturgeon

The lake sturgeon is a slow-moving fish that prefers sand or gravel habitat on the river or lake bottom, but they will migrate upriver during spawning season. Although the male sturgeon's typical lifespan is 50 to 60 years, female sturgeon can live up to 150 years. Lake sturgeon can weigh more than 300 pounds and reach a length of 9 feet.



Justin Chiotti with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service holds one of the smaller Lake Sturgeon caught during the day.

LESTER GRAHAM / [MICHIGAN RADIO](#)

Once considered a nuisance fish because they damaged fishing gear, this species became commercially important in the late 1800s, harvested for their meat and eggs. Unsustainable harvest, degraded water quality, and construction of dams that disrupt their movements have combined to cause sturgeon populations to decline

throughout their range.

The release of this substantial finding indicates that the grounds of the petition may be warranted, and the USFWS will conduct a thorough status assessment. USFWS found that the petition presented a compelling case to list the lake sturgeon, citing the potential threats associated with dams and hydroelectric facilities, dredging and channelization, contaminants and habitat fragmentation, and impacts from invasive species.

Upcoming 12-Month Assessment

Currently, the USFWS has added the Lake Sturgeon to the national listing Workplan, which determines when the 12-month assessment will begin. USFWS will collect information from species experts, conservation groups, state and tribal agencies, and other sources that inform their assessment of the lake sturgeon. Results from the assessment will indicate whether or not listing the lake sturgeon under the Endangered Species Act is warranted.

The Federal Register docket numbers and links for the substantial petition finding for lake sturgeon are FWS-R3-ES-2018-0110 and <https://www.regulations.gov/docket?D=FWS-R3-ES-2018-0110>.

EnviroScience has considerable fisheries experience, including with related species such as the Atlantic Sturgeon (*Acipenser oxyrinchus oxyrinchus*) and Gulf Sturgeon (*Acipenser oxyrinchus desotoi*). If you believe your operations may be affected by this or a similar listing, reach out to our experts at info@EnviroScienceInc.com.