



BLM Photo/Larisa Bogardus

Foskett Spring in Lake County is home to the Foskett speckled dace, a minnow recently removed from the endangered species list.

Eastern Oregon minnow endangered no more

By JES BURNS
Oregon Public Broadcasting

LAKEVIEW — The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is removing a southeast Oregon fish from the endangered species list.

The Foskett speckled dace — a 4-inch, greenish-gray minnow — is the third Oregon fish to be declared recovered. It's a move that eliminates special protections evoked under the Endangered Species Act. A fourth Oregon fish species, the Borax Lake chub, is currently proposed for delisting.

"The Service is thrilled with Oregon's progress," said Pacific region director Robyn Thorson in a press release. "We can now direct our focus to species that are more in need of recovery efforts."

The Foskett speckled dace is native to tiny Foskett Spring about 30 miles east of Lakeview. The fish were initially listed as threatened in 1985 under the Endangered Species Act. Foskett Spring was on private property and cattle grazing had damaged the fish's spring and wetland habitat to the point where survival of the minnow was in question.

"Some of the initial observations made during the 1970s, when concern for the fish was first

raised, people observed fish swimming in the cattle hoof prints in the mud," said government biologist Alan Mauer.

Since being federally protected, the Bureau of Land Management purchased the land around the spring and built a fence to keep out cattle.

Then wildlife managers were faced with another problem: The cattails, bulrushes and other vegetation grew in so thick that it started to take over open water habitat that the dace prefers.

"I don't want to say we overprotected it, but it's kind of like the pendulum swung the other direction," Mauer said.

So now, periodically federal agencies dig out or burn areas of thick vegetation to open up the habitat. Mauer said this work likely corresponds to major surges in Foskett speckled dace numbers.

Since listing, the number of dace have swung between 750 and 25,000 fish — but 4,000-10,000 fish is the more typical population.

In the case of the Foskett speckled dace, conservation work by federal agencies won't stop with the fish's removal from the endangered species list. The Fish and Wildlife Service has an agreement with the Bureau of Land Management and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to continue to monitor and do habitat work at the site.

"We have a long-term plan to occasionally — we hope it's not constant, we hope it's more just an occasional visit to the spring to assess whether we need to help the fish by opening up some of the habitat," Mauer said. "We're just trying to do this for the longterm persistence of the species."

Public records panel to meet Friday

The Oregonian

SALEM — Oregon's public records advisory panel will hold a special meeting Friday to formulate plans to bolster its independence from the office of Gov. Kate Brown.

The state's public records czar, Ginger McCall, announced Monday she plans to resign due to what she said was intolerable interference by Brown staffers, who she says directed her to align her priorities with the governor's while giving the semblance of representing the public's interest.

Since then, *The Oregonian*/OregonLive has published a series of revelations about the deepening controversy, including steps Brown and officials in her administration took to kill the Public Records Advisory Council's only 2019 legislative proposal to improve

government transparency.

Brown said in a statement Monday that she didn't know about the power struggle between her top lawyer, Misha Isaak, and others in her office and McCall and her staff and advisers. But *The Oregonian*/OregonLive obtained a briefing memo from another of Brown's attorneys showing the governor was informed of multiple instances in which Brown staffers told McCall she should do things their way.

According to contemporaneous notes McCall wrote, Isaak told her that he was her supervisor and she should not issue reports without first submitting them for his review. A draft opinion from the Oregon Department of Justice said there was no evidence lawmakers intended for Isaak to supervise the advocate in any way.

The council will meet by

telephone at 3:30 p.m. and McCall invited members of the public to join the call to hear the public proceedings. The public can attend the meeting virtually using GoToMeeting software or hear the audio by dialing in. Details about how to do so are found at <https://sos.oregon.gov/public-records/Pages/advisory-council.aspx>.

According to the agenda, McCall will explain what led up to her resignation, share documents detailing some of her allegations and give her suggestions for increasing the independence of her office and the council. The council will also discuss potential legislation "to make more explicit the independence" of the advocate and council, "acting now to ensure public confidence immediately in (the council) and in public records issues going forward."

BRIEFLY

Public health advisory issued for water at 3 coast beaches

NEWPORT — Health officials have issued a public health advisory because of higher-than-normal bacteria levels found off three Oregon coast beaches near Newport.

Oregon Health Authority officials said Wednesday that people should avoid contact with the water at Beverly Beach State Park and Agate Beach and Seal Rock state recreation sites until the advisory is lifted.

People should avoid wading in nearby creeks, pools of water on the beach, or in discolored water and any water runoff flowing into the ocean.

Officials recommend avoiding swimming in the ocean within 48 hours of any rainstorm because of possible stormwater runoff, sewer overflows, failing septic systems and animal waste from livestock, pets and wildlife.

Health officials say high fecal bacteria levels can cause diarrhea, stomach cramps, rashes and upper respiratory infections, among other illnesses. Children and elderly people may be more vulnerable.

Agency's impact statement for Oregon land expected next year

SALEM — A federal agency could release its final environmental report related to management of a large tract of Oregon land early next year.

The *Capital Press* reported Monday that a U.S. Bureau of Land Management environmental impact statement could be released in February.

A public comment period on the draft management plan ended Aug. 28.

An official says review and comment periods of 30 days for the public and 60 days for the governor's office will begin after the impact statement is released.

The land bureau's plan involves management of 7,188 square miles in southeastern Oregon.

The agency's Vale district office is amending a 2002 plan that was vacated in federal appeals court.

A 2010 settlement agreement requires updated land information and analysis of management scenarios.

— Associated Press

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