



# United States Department of the Interior

## FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

1208-B Main Street  
Daphne, Alabama 36526

IN REPLY REFER TO:

**MAR 20 2019**

Dear Conservation Partner:

Re: Alabama pearlshell (*Margaritifera marrianae*) Species Status Assessment

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is responsible for identifying species in need of protection under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA) as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531-1543). In 2012, the Service identified the Alabama pearlshell (*Margaritifera marrianae*) as an endangered species. The Alabama pearlshell is a freshwater mussel believed to be endemic to the Alabama and Conecuh River drainages in Conecuh, Crenshaw, Monroe, and Escambia counties, Alabama (see enclosed map).

The Service is currently reevaluating the endangered status of the Alabama pearlshell to determine if reclassification is warranted. In support of developing the status review, we will conduct a Species Status Assessment (SSA) and document our analysis in a SSA Report. The SSA will use the best available scientific information to evaluate the species' needs, as well as its past and current resiliency, redundancy, representation, and future conditions. If the SSA for the Alabama pearlshell finds reclassification inappropriate at this time, it will be used to inform and develop a Recovery Plan for the species.

Little is known of the life history for the Alabama pearlshell. However, what we do know is how acutely sensitive this mussel is to changes and disruptions in its habitat. This, combined with its limited habitat range (see enclosed map) make the relationships with our conservation partners who work within its habitat, of paramount importance to its recovery. Over the past few years, the Service has worked closely with these partners to make progress towards protection and recovery of the species. In the future we hope to continue developing these relationships and are receptive to suggestions for their growth.

Currently, we are compiling information on the Alabama pearlshell, and would appreciate any additional information on the species or its habitat that you can provide. Specifically, we are looking for information including:

- A. Species' distribution, biology, life history;
- B. Positive and negative survey data;
- C. Information on water and habitat quality within the Alabama and Conecuh River watersheds;
- D. Information on other potential threats to the species;
- E. Planned or anticipated management actions or protections implemented that may have benefited (or harmed) the species.

- F. Information for landowners directly connected to the critical habitat; or
- G. Information concerning physical access to the critical habitat.

We will accept new information throughout this process, but it would be most useful if provided by April 30, 2019, so that it can be considered during SSA development. Information should be submitted to Anthony Ford as listed in the contact information below. All data and information submitted to us, including names and addresses, will become part of the administrative record.

Additional information about the Alabama pearlshell can be found by visiting the following website: <https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp0/profile/speciesProfile?spcode=F01W>.

If you would like additional information or have any questions about the Alabama pearlshell's Species Status Assessment, please contact Mr. Anthony Ford of my staff at (251) 441-5838; via email at [anthony\\_ford@fws.gov](mailto:anthony_ford@fws.gov); or by writing to the following address:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Alabama Ecological Services Field Office  
1208-B Main Street  
Daphne, AL 36526

Thank you for your interest in the conservation of at-risk, threatened, and endangered species.

Sincerely,



William J. Pearson  
Field Supervisor  
Alabama Ecological Services Field Office

Enclosure



# Alabama Pearlshell (*Margaritifera marrianae*) Known Range Map

