



CENTER FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

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## **Four Species of Lamprey to be Considered for Protection Under the Endangered Species Act**

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Eugene – According to a settlement agreement with nine conservation groups led by the Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center (KSWC) and Siskiyou Regional Education Project (SREP), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service agreed to determine by November 15, 2005 whether four species of lamprey require protection under the Endangered Species Act. The groups filed a petition to list the species January 2003. After Fish and Wildlife failed to respond to the petition, the groups filed suit.

“Lamprey have declined dramatically and need the safety net of the Endangered Species Act to survive,” states Joseph Vaile, campaign coordinator of KSWC. “Lamprey are an important part of the Northwest’s natural heritage and an important link in the web of life that sustains Northwest rivers and streams,” states Rich Nawa, staff ecologist for the SREP.

Lampreys are not related to eels, but superficially resemble them. Similar to salmon, Pacific and river lamprey are born in Northwest streams, migrate to the sea and return to streams to spawn. Also like salmon, lamprey populations have been decimated by construction of dams and the devastation of their home streams by logging, agriculture, urban sprawl, mining, dredging, pollution and other factors. Streams healthy enough to still support lamprey are also prime habitat for salmon, as well as sources of clean drinking water for communities.

“Continued destruction of Northwest rivers is resulting in loss and decline of Northwest fisheries,” states Noah Greenwald, conservation biologist with Center for Biological Diversity. “Despite the poor status of Northwest fisheries, the Bush Administration is weakening protections for our rivers and streams.”

Although some lamprey feed on salmon in the ocean, lampreys benefit salmon populations by buffering migrating adult salmon from predation by marine mammals in estuaries. Seals and sea lions prefer lamprey when feeding in estuaries because they are easier to catch. Young lamprey, called ammocoetes, clean streams by filter feeding organic material and provide a food source for predator fish, including juvenile salmon.

Pacific lamprey, river lamprey, western brook lamprey and kern brook lamprey were petitioned for listing. The settlement agreement ensures these species will receive prompt consideration for protection. The Bush Administration has to date only protected 31 species under the Act, all under court order, compared to 394 species protected during the Clinton Administration’s first term. The administration claims there is not enough money to list species needing protection. A review of their annual budget requests, however, reveals that year after year the administration requests only a fraction of the money needed to properly implement the Endangered Species Act.

More info on lamprey can be found at [www.biologicaldiversity.org/swcbd/species/lamprey/index.html](http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/swcbd/species/lamprey/index.html)