

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE SPECIES ASSESSMENT AND LISTING PRIORITY ASSIGNMENT FORM

Scientific Name:

Planorbella magnifica

Common Name:

magnificent ramshorn

Lead region:

Region 4 (Southeast Region)

Information current as of:

04/13/2015

Status/Action

Funding provided for a proposed rule. Assessment not updated.

Species Assessment - determined species did not meet the definition of the endangered or threatened under the Act and, therefore, was not elevated to the Candidate status.

New Candidate

Continuing Candidate

Candidate Removal

Taxon is more abundant or widespread than previously believed or not subject to the degree of threats sufficient to warrant issuance of a proposed listing or continuance of candidate status

Taxon not subject to the degree of threats sufficient to warrant issuance of a proposed listing or continuance of candidate status due, in part or totally, to conservation efforts that remove or reduce the threats to the species

Range is no longer a U.S. territory

Insufficient information exists on biological vulnerability and threats to support listing

- Taxon mistakenly included in past notice of review
- Taxon does not meet the definition of "species"
- Taxon believed to be extinct
- Conservation efforts have removed or reduced threats
- More abundant than believed, diminished threats, or threats eliminated.

Petition Information

Non-Petitioned

Petitioned - Date petition received: 04/20/2010

90-Day Positive:09/27/2011

12 Month Positive:10/26/2011

Did the Petition request a reclassification? **No**

For Petitioned Candidate species:

Is the listing warranted(if yes, see summary threats below) **Yes**

To Date, has publication of the proposal to list been precluded by other higher priority listing? **Yes**

Explanation of why precluded:

We find that the immediate issuance of a proposed rule and timely promulgation of a final rule for this species has been, for the preceding 12 months, and continues to be, precluded by higher priority listing actions (including candidate species with lower LPNs). During the past 12 months, the majority our entire national listing budget has been consumed by work on various listing actions to comply with court orders and court-approved settlement agreements; meeting statutory deadlines for petition findings or listing determinations; emergency listing evaluations and determinations; and essential litigation-related administrative and program management tasks. We will continue to monitor the status of this species as new information becomes available. This review will determine if a change in status is warranted, including the need to make prompt use of emergency listing procedures. For information on listing actions taken over the past 12 months, see the discussion of Progress on Revising the Lists, in the current CNOR which can be viewed on our Internet website (<http://endangered.fws.gov/>).

Historical States/Territories/Countries of Occurrence:

- **States/US Territories:** North Carolina
- **US Counties:** Brunswick, NC, New Hanover, NC
- **Countries:**Country information not available

Current States/Counties/Territories/Countries of Occurrence:

- **States/US Territories:** North Carolina
- **US Counties:** Brunswick, NC, New Hanover, NC
- **Countries:**Country information not available

Land Ownership:

Available information indicates the species is likely extirpated in the wild. Presently the only known surviving individuals of the species are being held as captive populations – one established and maintained by a private individual at his residence in Pender County, North Carolina, one at NC State University’s Veterinary School’s Aquatic Epidemiology Conservation Laboratory in Raleigh, North Carolina, and another is in the process of being established at the NC Wildlife Resources Commission’s Watha State Fish Hatchery in Watha, North Carolina.

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Biological Information

Species Description:

The following is adapted from Adams 1990a and 1993 and references therein: The magnificent ramshorn is a freshwater snail in the family Planorbidae (Pilsbry 1903), a family of air-breathing snails. It is the largest North American snail in this family. It has a discoidal (i.e., coiling in one plane), relatively thin shell that reaches a diameter commonly exceeding 35 millimeters (mm) (1.38 inches) and heights exceeding 20 mm (0.79 inch). The great width of its shell, in relation to the diameter, makes it easily identifiable at all ages. The shell is brown to horn colored with leopard-like spots and is thin and fragile. The center of the shell is deeply sunken on each side, with coils having steep slopes which form acute to sub-acute angles on the outside edges of the coils. The aperture of the shell is somewhat bell-shaped and very wide, extending beyond the sides of the shell.

Taxonomy:

The magnificent ramshorn was described by Pilsbry (1903) from the lower Cape Fear River region of North Carolina. Pilsbry (1903) placed it in the genus *Planorbis* Muller 1774. Baker (1945) reassigned the species to the genus *Helisoma* Swainson 1840. He recognized two subgenera under *Helisoma* – *Pierosoma* Dall 1905 and *Planorbella* Haldeman 1842 – and placed the magnificent ramshorn under *Pierosoma*. Taylor (1966) subsequently elevated *Planorbella* to full genus rank and placed the subgenus *Pierosoma* within it. The species' reproductive system (figured by Baker 1945: pl. 31, fig. 20), shell characters, and DNA sequence data all support *Planorbella magnifica* as a valid species (Bogan et al. 2003, pp. 5 and 6). The Service has reviewed the available taxonomic literature, and is not aware of any challenges to the validity of this species.

Habitat/Life History:

Background

The magnificent ramshorn is believed to be a southeastern North Carolina endemic. The species is known from only four sites in the lower Cape Fear River Basin in North Carolina. Although the complete historic range of the species is unknown, given the size of the species and the fact that it was not reported until 1903 is an indication that the species may have always been rare and localized (Adams 1993, p. 2). Prior to 1992, the magnificent ramshorn had been recorded only from Greenfield Lake, a millpond located on a tributary to the Cape Fear River within the present city limits of Wilmington, New Hanover County, North Carolina (Bartsch 1908, pp. 697 and 698) and Orton Pond (also sometimes referred to as Sprunt's Pond), a millpond located on Orton Creek in Brunswick County, North Carolina (Adams and Gerberich 1988, p. 125; Adams 1990a, p. 27). During range-wide surveys in 1992 and 1993, Adams (1993, p. 4) recorded the species at one additional site, Sand Hill Creek Pond (also referred to as Pleasant Oaks Pond), a millpond on Sand Hill Creek in Brunswick County, North Carolina. In 2004, Andy Wood with the National Audubon Society discovered an additional small occurrence of the species in McKinzie Pond, a millpond on McKinzie Creek, in Brunswick County, North Carolina (Andy Wood, Wilmington, NC, personal communication 2004). Surveys of over a hundred potential sites over the last few decades have not uncovered any additional localities.

The magnificent ramshorn was last recorded in Greenfield Lake by Bartsch in 1908 (Adams and Gerberich 1988, p. 125; Adams 1990a, p. 27); it was last seen in Sand Hill Creek Pond in 1994 (Wood 2002, p. 9) and the last and only observation of the species in McKinzie Pond was in 2004 (Wood, pers. comm. 2008 and 2010). The species is now believed to be extirpated from these three localities. Adams and Gerberich (1988, p. 125) last observed a living specimen in Orton Pond in 1986. During a subsequent survey in 1987, they were able to find only shell material and reported that much of the aquatic vegetation had died back. Access to the Orton Pond has since been restricted by the landowner (Adams and Gerberich 1988, p. 125; William Adams, Wilmington, NC, pers. comm. 1990 and 2003; Wood pers. comm. 2009, 2015) and it is currently unknown if the species still survives in the pond.

In 1992, Mr. Andy Wood established a captive, refuge population of the magnificent ramshorn at the North Carolina Aquarium at Fort Fisher, North Carolina, under a captive propagation permit issued by the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC). Salt contamination of the aquaria in which the snails were held, believed to have been caused by salt-laden air circulating within the facility, subsequently forced Mr. Wood to establish holding facilities for the snail at his personal residence (Wood 2004, p. 9). Unless the species still survives in Orton Pond, which appears unlikely (see “Threats,” section A. below) the snails currently being held and propagated by Mr. Wood, NC State University, and NCWRC are currently the only magnificent ramshorn snails known in existence.

Habitat/Life History

Although the magnificent ramshorn is a large snail, its shell is thin and fragile indicating that it is adapted to lentic (still or slow flowing) aquatic habitats (Bartsch 1908, p. 697; Adams 1993, pp. 2 and 3). Available information indicates that suitable habitat for the species is restricted to relatively shallow, sheltered portions of still or sluggish, freshwater bodies with an abundance and diversity of submerged aquatic vegetation and a circumneutral pH (pH within the range of 6.8 – 7.5) (Adams 1993, p. 8).

The pre-settlement distribution and habitat use of the species is not very well known. The only known records for the species are post-1900 and are from manmade millponds constructed in the 1700s to provide a freshwater source for rice agriculture (Adams 1993, pp. 21 and 22). However, it is highly plausible that the species inhabited beaver ponds, which were plentiful in the region prior to the extirpation of the North American beaver (*Castor canadensis*) in North Carolina circa 1900 and subsequently persisted in millponds which replicated habitat conditions found in the beaver ponds and offered the only available suitable habitat (Adams 1993 and references therein, p. 22). It is also possible that the species may also have once been a faunal component of sluggish portions of the Cape Fear River proper until natural forces (e.g., sea level rise and changes in the inlet due to storm events) and/or navigational changes, which began as early as 1822, altered salinity regimes, flow and current patterns, and other hydrological conditions. These alterations would have made conditions unsuitable for the snail and limited it to portions of tributary streams providing suitable habitat protected from water quality and hydrological changes occurring elsewhere in the river basin (Adams 1993, pp. 21 and 22).

Bartsch (1908, p. 698) reported finding the magnificent ramshorn only in fragrant waterlily (*Nymphaea odorata*) and pondweed (*Potamogeton* sp.) beds in cove areas of Greenfield Lake. Adams and Gerberich (1988, p. 125), Adams (1993, p. 8), and Wood (2002, p. 1) also reported finding the species on aquatic vegetation, fragrant waterlily and spatterdock (*Nuphar luteum*), in similar sheltered habitat in Orton Pond, Sand Hill Creek Pond, and McKinzie Pond, respectively. However, Adams (1993, p. 8) reported that the species appeared to be more generally distributed in Sand Hill Creek Pond than what he observed in Orton Pond. Adams (1993, p. 8) reported that the maximum depth where he found the species in Orton Pond and Sand Hill Creek Pond was approximately one meter. The Planorbidae family of snails is on the whole a distinctly shallow-water group (Baker 1943, p. 17).

Salinity and pH also are major factors limiting the distribution of the magnificent ramshorn. Wood (2002, p. 3) reported that captive held magnificent ramshorn snails ceased all activity, withdrew into their shell, and sank to the bottom of their tank within 24 hours of exposure to salinity levels of 1.0 part per thousand (ppt). Within 8 hours they withdrew into their shell and died within 36 hours if not removed from water with a salinity of 5 ppt. Also, Wood (2002, pp. 2 and 3) observed that magnificent ramshorn snails fed and moved around normally in water with a pH of 6.8 to 7.5, but that the snails' feeding and other activity would cease altogether at pH levels at or below 6.5 and at or above 8.0. Greenfield Lake (NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources [NCDENR] 2004, p. 331), Orton Pond, Sand Hill Creek Pond (Adams 1993, App. C Field Data Sheets) and McKinzie Pond (Wood pers. comm. 2010) were all reported to have a circumneutral pH, i.e., within the range 6.8 – 7.5. This is higher than typical for many of the water bodies in the region. This is believed to be due to significant input of groundwater from underlying limestone formations in the watersheds of the creeks feeding these impoundments (Adams and Gerberich 1988, p. 125).

Like other species in the family Planorbidae, the magnificent ramshorn has the ability to breathe free air. Rather than having gills, the mantle cavity walls are heavily vascularized and form a lung sac (adapted from Baker 1945, p. 17). This gives the snails the ability to draw oxygen out of the air, as well as breathe under water. However, the length of time the species can live out of water is unknown and likely depends on several factors such as air humidity levels and air temperature.

Members of the family Planorbidae are hermaphroditic (individuals have both male and female reproductive organs) (Baker 1943, p. 4). However, it is currently unknown whether they self-fertilize their eggs, mate with other individuals of the species, or both. Wood (2004, p. 12) reported that, while he has not precisely documented mating, he has observed pairs bonded to one another for more than 15 minutes. It is believed that in the wild the species reaches sexual maturity at two years of age; however, Wood (2004, p. 2) reported that in captivity, possibly due to a supplemental diet, the species can reach sexual maturity during the first year of age. The magnificent ramshorn lays fertilized eggs on the undersides of leaves of aquatic vegetation and shows a preference for spatterdock (Wood 2004, p. 12). In captivity the species has also been reported to lay eggs on any smooth, submerged material, including the sides of containers in which they are held (Wood 2004, p. 12). Wood (2004, p. 12; 2010 p. 4) reported egg laying is likely triggered by water temperature and typically begins in April, with maximum egg production occurring during June and July, and likely extends as late as at least October. It is currently unknown how many egg masses can be produced by an individual snail. Typically egg masses typically contain 20 to 30 eggs and, depending on water temperature, eggs hatch within 16 to 25 days (Wood 2010, p. 4), although in 2011 some egg masses hatched within 14 days (Wood pers. comm 2012). While juvenile magnificent ramshorns have eyes, the eyes gradually disappear as the snails grow and adults of the species are blind (Dall 1907, p. 90; Bartsch 1908, p. 698; Adams 1993, P. 18). Dall (1907, p. 90) reported that the life span of the magnificent ramshorn is likely about 2 years; Adams (1993, p. 18) reported that a study of growth rest lines on the shells of available specimens support this conclusion (the species' metabolism and growth slow down during the winter months, leaving growth rings similar to growth rings on trees).

Like other members of the Planorbidae family, the magnificent ramshorn is believed to be primarily

vegetarian, feeding on submerged aquatic plants, algae, and detritus (decomposing plant material) (Baker 1943, p. 19; Wood 2004, p. 13). Wood (2004, p. 13) observed that the magnificent ramshorn showed a preference for spatterdock, especially the ripe seed head of the plant. In captivity, the species has also been reported to feed on Carolina fanwort (*Cabomba caroliniana*) (D. DuMond pers. comm. to Adams 1993), algae, detritus, lettuce, and commercial foods containing algae meal (Wood 2004, pp. 1, 7 and 13).

Historical Range/Distribution:

The species has been recorded only from Greenfield Lake within the present city limits of Wilmington, New Hanover County, North Carolina (Bartsch 1908, pp. 697 and 698); as well as Orton Pond (Adams and Gerberich 1988, p. 125; Adams 1990a p. 27), Sand Hill Creek Pond (Adams 1993, p. 4) and McKinzie Pond, in Brunswick County, North Carolina (Wood pers. comm. 2004).

Current Range Distribution:

Available information indicates that the magnificent ramshorn is likely extirpated from the wild. Presently, the only known surviving individuals of the species are being held as part of captive populations; one established and maintained by a private individual at his residence in Pender County, North Carolina, one at NC State University's Veterinary School's Aquatic Epidemiology Conservation Laboratory in Raleigh, North Carolina, and another one at the NCWRC's Watha State Fish Hatchery in Watha, North Carolina.

Population Estimates/Status:

Currently known only from three established captive populations, one robust population currently comprised of approximately 900+ adults, one with approximately 200+ adults, and one population of 50+ small adults; the magnificent ramshorn is highly vulnerable to extinction.

Threats

A. The present or threatened destruction, modification, or curtailment of its habitat or range:

Although the complete historic range of the magnificent ramshorn is unknown, available information indicates that the species was likely once an inhabitant of beaver ponds on tributaries in the lower Cape Fear River basin; the species may also have once inhabited backwater and other sluggish portions of the main channel of lower Cape Fear River (Adams 1993, pp 21-22). Beaver pond habitat was eliminated throughout much of the lower Cape Fear River as a result of the extirpation of the beaver due to trapping and hunting during the 19th and early 20th centuries. This, together with draining and destruction of beaver ponds for development, agriculture and other purposes, is believed to have led to a significant decline in the snails' habitat and significant reduction in

its abundance (Wood 2010, pp. 6 and 7). Also, dredging and deepening of the Cape Fear River channel, which began as early as 1822, and opening of the Atlantic Intercoastal Waterway (through Snow's Cut) in 1930 for navigational purposes have caused saltwater intrusion, altered the diversity and abundance of aquatic vegetation, and changed flows and current patterns far up the river channel and its lower tributaries (Adams 1993, p 22; Wood 2010, p 7). Under these circumstances, the magnificent ramshorn could have survived only in areas of tributary streams not affected by salt water intrusion and other changes, such as the millponds protected from saltwater intrusion by their dams (Adams 1993, p. 22).

The extirpation of the magnificent ramshorn from Greenfield Lake is likely attributable to alteration of the lake's water quality and chemistry resulting from past events. These include breaks in sewerlines on the bottom of the lake; sewage overflow from nearby manholes during storm events; runoff of fertilizers, sediment, toxic chemicals, and other pollutants from the heavy development within the watershed; and/or, efforts by the city to control aquatic plants and algae within the lake (Adams 1990b, p. 104). As a result of heavy nutrient input, Greenfield Lake has become eutrophic and the majority of the aquatic vegetation currently present within the lake is filamentous green algae (Hackney and Brady 1996, p. 19; Adams pers. comm. 2003). Also, the city routinely conducted winter water-level drawdown in the past, in an attempt to control aquatic plant and algae levels within the lake. These drawdowns also likely had an adverse effect on the snail, as well the aquatic vegetation on which it is generally found (Adams 1990b, p. 104).

The Sand Hill Creek population of the magnificent ramshorn is believed to have been extirpated in 1996 when the dam on the pond was breached during flooding associated with Hurricane Fran. Drawdown of the pond due to failure of the dam and saltwater intrusion into the pond affected both the magnificent ramshorn as well as the aquatic vegetation providing habitat for the snail, and researchers were unable to locate the snail during a subsequent survey (Wood pers. comm. 1996). This population of the species was last surveyed in 2007 and no evidence of the snail was found (Wood 2010, p. 2). Access by researchers to the pond has since been denied by the landowners (Wood 2010, p. 2).

The magnificent ramshorn was last observed in McKinzie Pond in 2004 (Wood pers. comm. 2008). This population of the species is believed to have been extirpated due to saltwater intrusion resulting from prolonged drought conditions. The reduction of freshwater levels feeding the stream allowed the tidal flow of saltwater to extend further up McKinzie Creek into the area harboring the snail (Wood pers. comm. 2008). Wood (2010, p. 2) reported that much of the submerged aquatic vegetation that previously flourished at this site, including spatterdock and cabomba, was damaged by saltwater.

Access to Orton Pond by researchers surveying for the magnificent ramshorn snail has been restricted since 1990 (Adams and Gerberich 1988, p. 125; Adams pers. comm. 1990 and 2003; Wood pers. comm.. 2009). However, Adams (1993, p. 9) reported that nuisance aquatic vegetation growth was increasing significantly in the pond in the late 1980s, possibly due to increased nutrient supply in the headwater reaches of Orton Creek from golf course and other development activities in the Boiling Springs Lakes area. He also reported that the landowners unsuccessfully attempted

to control the aquatic vegetation by a partial drawdown of the lake during the winter 1989/1990, a method extremely detrimental to species like the magnificent ramshorn. It is currently unknown whether the snail survived this drawdown or whether the owners made subsequent attempts to control aquatic vegetation in Orton Pond that may have eliminated the species.

The human residential population of Brunswick and New Hanover Counties is rapidly increasing – both counties are a popular vacationing and retirement areas. Results of the 2010 census indicate both counties are among the most rapidly developing counties in the state with population growth greater than 25% during the period of 2000-2010

(http://www.wral.com/news/national_world/national/flash/9204746/). Typically as development increases, the input of nutrients (through both surface and groundwater), silt, and other pollutants into the aquatic system increases. Increased input of these pollutants into the stream from point and non-point sources may result in eutrophication, decreased dissolved oxygen concentration, increased acidity and conductivity, and other changes in water chemistry. Poorly planned development within the watersheds of streams feeding areas that formerly harbored the magnificent ramshorn or that may provide potential habitat for the species also has the potential to reduce groundwater levels, which could have a serious adverse effect on pH, water hardness, and salinity levels.

B. Overutilization for commercial, recreational, scientific, or educational purposes:

Currently, because the species appears to be extirpated in the wild, collecting is not considered a threat to the species. However, its rarity and large size could conceivably generate interest to scientific collectors and possibly aquarium and pond enthusiasts. Unauthorized collecting by private and institutional collectors, hobbyists, or others could pose a significant threat to potential future efforts to reestablish the species in areas within its former range.

C. Disease or predation:

Diseases of aquatic snails are poorly known and it is currently unknown whether disease poses a threat to the species.

Also, prior to its extirpation from the wild, the magnificent ramshorn and its eggs were undoubtedly consumed by various predators, including other aquatic snails (species like the marsh ramshorn [*Planorbella trivolvis*] are believed to feed on the eggs of other snails), predatory insects, snail-eating fish such as the redear sunfish (*Lepomis microlophus*), amphibians and aquatic reptiles (e.g., aquatic turtles and bullfrogs), small mammals, and waterfowl and wading birds (Baker 1943, p. 19 and Wood 2004, pp. 1, 11, and 12). Predation by naturally occurring predators is a normal aspect of the population dynamics and generally would not be considered to pose a significant threat to a healthy population. However, if a predator or predators were to obtain access to the refuge population, the only known surviving individuals of the species, this could potentially lead to

the species' extinction. Also, predation could be a limiting factor to recovery of the magnificent ramshorn in the wild by affecting potential future efforts to reintroduce the species within its historic range.

In 2012, the snails at the NC State University's Aquatic Epidemiology and Conservation Laboratory were being exclusively held in indoor aquaria. There was fairly substantial mortality early on. Two primary problems were observed: poor shell quality and a histopath analysis indicated a systemic bacterial infection. In 2013, shell quality issues appear to have been mitigated by providing additional aeration, full spectrum lights (for Vitamin D production), and adding calcium to the tanks. In addition, two outdoor tanks have been installed to allow for natural light exposure.

After a period of substantial success rearing juvenile snails, and a substantial increase in the captive population the population experienced substantial mortality. Individual snails were lethargic, and their foot would protrude without it being associated with locomotion. Specimens were obtained and processed for histopathologic evaluation. Upon histopathologic review, the snails that were examined displayed evidence of a systemic bacterial infection. Bacilli were observed in multiple tissues. Aerobic cultures of tissue inoculums from moribund snails grew a multitude of organisms, however, no consistent isolate was made that could be associated with the tissues obtained from the affected snails.

It was hypothesized that the clinical problems and mortality were associated with the systemic infections noted during histopathologic examination. Snails were treated with an antimicrobial in an experimental design. Unfortunately, the experiments were unsuccessful in determining the causes of mortality because of potential cross-contamination that may have occurred between the treated and untreated tanks, or because of potential changes in nitrifying bacteria essential for mitigating the presence of toxic ammonia and nitrite in the aquaria. Additional research is needed to determine the nature and cause of the infection and mortality observed, as well as the short and long-term effects of changes in pH and other rearing parameters. Substantial additional work is needed to optimize the diets of the snails when held in captivity.

D. The inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms:

The magnificent ramshorn is currently listed by the state of North Carolina as an endangered species. However, this designation does not protect the species from "incidental" harm, injury, death (impacts resulting from activities not specifically intend to the harm the species) or provide any protection to the species' habitat except on state-owned lands. In addition, neither the state nor the local governments with jurisdictions within the watersheds of streams in the lower Cape Fear River Basin currently have regulations/ordinances that are adequate to protect the species from the effects of agriculture, private forestry, and residential and industrial development activities (e.g., loss of riparian buffers, point and non-point source pollution, and groundwater contamination).

E. Other natural or manmade factors affecting its continued existence:

Climate change and sea level rise pose a significant long term threat to the survival of the

magnificent ramshorn. As previously noted, the magnificent ramshorn is salt intolerant and saltwater intrusion into its habitat is one of the primary factors that has contributed to its extirpation in the wild. During the past century, sea level has risen by roughly 20.32 centimeters (8 inches) and available information indicates the rate of sea level rise is increasing (US Global Change Research Program [USGCRP] 2009, p. 18). While future rates of sea level rise are uncertain and dependent upon ice sheet response to climate change, continued sea level rise threatens the southeastern US coastal zone with retreat of shorelines, inundation of coastal wetlands and streams, and increased salinity of estuaries, coastal wetlands, and tidal rivers and creeks, pushing freshwater coastal ecosystems further inland. In addition, in the future the southeastern US is threatened with potential higher average temperatures (resulting increased evaporation rates), less frequent rain fall (resulting in potentially more frequent and longer dry periods), and an increase in intensity of storm events, including hurricanes; all of which are likely to increase the rate and upstream distance of salt water intrusion into coastal streams. Also, higher average temperatures and longer periods between rainfall events, together with increased development and human population levels in Brunswick and New Hanover Counties, will result in an increase demand on freshwater systems for drinking, irrigation, and other water needs, exacerbating the effects of sea level rise on streams in the lower Cape Fear River basin which encompasses the entire known historic range of the magnificent ramshorn (adapted from USGCRP and references therein 2009, pp. 1111-1116).

During his initial attempt to propagate the magnificent ramshorn, Wood (2004 pp. 8 and 12) documented hybridization between the magnificent ramshorn and the more common marsh ramshorn (*P. trivolvis*). Although hybridization is not believed to have played a significant role in the extirpation of the magnificent ramshorn from the wild, it could adversely affect efforts to recover the species.

Conservation Measures Planned or Implemented :

In early 2012, a small (35 individuals) captive population was established at NC State University's Veterinary School's Aquatic Epidemiology Conservation Laboratory in Raleigh, North Carolina. These captive snails reproduced successfully, however problems with shell quality and high mortality were observed. While the shell quality issues have been successfully mitigated, efforts are still underway to treat possible symptoms that cause the bacteria-based mortality.

Additional facilities for holding and propagating the magnificent ramshorn at the NCWRC's hatchery in Watha, North Carolina have been established. In 2011, efforts at the Watha hatchery were initially deemed unsuccessful, however a few adult snails survived and were allowed to overwinter (2012) in an established tank. The Hatchery expanded its snail holding capacity in summer 2013 with the addition of a second 600-gallon tank, and plans in 2015 include the addition of nine tanks as well as a predator enclosure. At this time, the both tanks at Watha are operational and supporting *P. magnifica*. SAV introduced in 2012 appears to be thriving, although attempts to introduce seedling spatterdock to both tanks have been unsuccessful. Results of water quality tests in the second Watha tank allowed the addition of a dozen snails from the 2012/2013 cohorts in August 2014. Both Watha tanks are outfitted with screen covers to exclude leaf litter and large animals.

In 2008, biologists with the Service, NCWRC, North Carolina Department of Transportation and Andy Wood met to evaluate some of the borrow pit ponds in Brunswick and New Hanover Counties to determine their suitability as habitat for the snail. One pond on a tract of land that remains for sale by the owner in New Hanover County has been identified as a likely location, however efforts to obtain funding to acquire the property have been unsuccessful.

In 2012, NCWRC staff assessed the availability of potential habitat on their property at Holly Shelter Gamelands in Pender County, North Carolina. No ponds currently exist that would be suitable for the magnificent ramshorn, and despite initial ideas to create pond habitat that could allow a population to be established in the wild, no appropriate sites appear to be available.

In 2012-2013, several potentially suitable locations, including a portion of Orton Pond, McKinzie Pond, Pleasant Oaks Pond (Sand Hill Creek/Big Pond), and nearby Pretty Pond, were all brought under single ownership. In 2014, the landowner approached the Service to determine the possibility of restoring the snail to Big Pond at the Pleasant Oaks Plantation. Currently, a proposal to assess snail restoration potential under a Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances is under review.

The NC Division of Water Resources is working with the city of Wilmington, North Carolina to improve the water quality of Greenfield Lake which formerly supported the species (Greenfield Lake is currently on the state's list of impaired water bodies).

Summary of Threats :

While several factors have likely contributed to the apparent extirpation of the magnificent ramshorn in the wild, the primary factors include loss of habitat associated with: 1) the extirpation of the North American beaver in the region in the early 20th century; 2) increased salinity and other water chemistry changes, and alteration of current and flow patterns in the main river channel and tributary streams in the lower Cape Fear River Basin resulting from navigational improvements to the lower Cape Fear River channel, beginning in the early 19th century and continuing into the present; and 3) increased input of nutrients and other pollutants from development activities adversely affecting water quality/chemistry and leading to increased nuisance aquatic plant and algae growth and efforts by landowners to control this aquatic plant and algae growth that are harmful to the snail and the aquatic vegetation it requires (Adams 1993, pp. 8-13, 23-24 and 21-22). Salt water intrusion resulting from storms (Wood pers. comm. 1995) and prolonged drought conditions (Wood pers. comm. 2008) are also factors that are believed to have contributed to, or resulted in, recent population extirpations of the species. The effects associated with navigational improvements within lower Cape Fear River Basin, development activities, nuisance aquatic plant control, and severe storms and prolonged drought conditions, as well as other factors, continue to limit available habitat of the species, threatening the species survival.

The magnificent ramshorn is believed to be extirpated in the wild. The only known surviving individuals of the species are currently being held and propagated at a private residence near Hampstead, North Carolina, at NC State University's Veterinary School's Aquatic Epidemiology

Conservation Laboratory in Raleigh, North Carolina, and at the NC Wildlife Resources Commission's Watha Fish Hatchery. A catastrophic event such as severe storm, disease, or predator infestation, or other event affecting these refuge populations could result in extinction of the species. We find that this species is warranted for listing throughout all its range, and, therefore, find that it is unnecessary to analyze whether it is threatened or endangered in a significant portion of its range.

For species that are being removed from candidate status:

_____ Is the removal based in whole or in part on one or more individual conservation efforts that you determined met the standards in the Policy for Evaluation of Conservation Efforts When Making Listing Decisions(PECE)?

Recommended Conservation Measures :

Assuring the long-term survival of the magnificent ramshorn will require, at a minimum: 1) providing resources to assist with maintaining the current refuge populations of the magnificent ramshorn, currently the only known surviving individuals of the species; 2) continuing to expand holding and controlled propagation of the species to include additional facilities and locations; 3) restoring and/or protecting water and habitat quality of streams and pond systems formerly providing habitat of the species; and 4) reestablishing populations of the species within the historic range and protecting these populations from existing and future threats. This will require: 1) additional research on the threats to the magnificent ramshorn and environmental requirements of the species; 2) compliance with existing federal, state, and local regulations; 3) where necessary, improvements to regulations, land use plans, etc. (e.g., increased protection of surface and ground water quality and quantity); 4) assistance from landowners/land managers, the public, and local governments and industries in identifying potential sites for reestablishing populations of the species and implementing conservation measures necessary for restoring and protecting these areas from current and future threats; and, 5) developing agreements with landowners and other partners to provide for reintroduction of the species within its former range.

Although the Service and NCWRC have provided some financial assistance to help with maintaining the refuge populations of the species, the individual maintaining the most robust population has contributed most of resources, including his time for several years. Additional assistance should be provided, as needed to assure the continued success of his controlled propagation efforts.

Priority Table

Magnitude	Immediacy	Taxonomy	Priority
High	Imminent	Monotypic genus	1
		Species	2
		Subspecies/Population	3
	Non-imminent	Monotypic genus	4
		Species	5
		Subspecies/Population	6
Moderate to Low	Imminent	Monotype genus	7
		Species	8
		Subspecies/Population	9
	Non-Imminent	Monotype genus	10
		Species	11
		Subspecies/Population	12

Rationale for Change in Listing Priority Number:

Magnitude:

The magnificent ramshorn appears to be extirpated from the wild due to habitat loss and degradation resulting from a variety of human-induced and natural factors. The only known surviving individuals of the species are presently being held and propagated at a private residence, a lab at NC State University's Veterinary School, and at NCWRC's Watha State Fish Hatchery.

Imminence :

While efforts have been made to restore habitat for the magnificent ramshorn at one of the sites known to have previously supported the species, all of the sites continue to be affected and/or threatened by the same factors (i.e., salt water intrusion and other water quality degradation, nuisance aquatic plant control, storms, sea level rise, etc.) believed to have resulted in extirpation of the species from the wild. Currently, only three captive populations exist; a single robust captive population of the species comprised of approximately 900+ adults, one with approximately 200+ adults, and one population of 50+ small adults. Although the robust captive population of the species has been maintained since 1993, a single catastrophic event, such as a severe storm, disease, or predator infestation, affecting this captive population could result in the near extinction of the species.

 Yes Have you promptly reviewed all of the information received regarding the species for the purpose of determination whether emergency listing is needed?

Emergency Listing Review

 No Is Emergency Listing Warranted?

Although only a few populations exist in captivity, one population has survived for several years despite natural threats (i.e., storms, disease, predators). Therefore, we do not believe the existing threats constitute an emergency situation at this time.

Description of Monitoring:

Because all wild populations are believed to be extirpated, monitoring currently occurs only for the captive populations. Evaluation of possible reintroduction sites continues.

In March-April 2015, the following species experts were contacted to review and update information for the species assessment required for the annual Candidate Notice of Review: Ryan Heise and Brena Jones, Aquatic Wildlife Diversity Biologists with the NCWRC; Andy Wood, President of Coastal Plain Conservation Group; Jay Levine and Chris Eads with the NC State University's College of Veterinary Medicine's Aquatic Epidemiology Conservation Laboratory. Information provided by those species experts has been included in this assessment.

Indicate which State(s) (within the range of the species) provided information or comments on the species or latest species assessment:

North Carolina

Indicate which State(s) did not provide any information or comment:

none

State Coordination:

The Magnificent ramshorn is currently listed by the state of North Carolina as an endangered species. Both NC State University and the NCWRC's Watha Fish Hatchery have established captive populations.

Literature Cited:

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Wood, A. 2004. Progress Report for the Magnificent ram-shorn snail project. Unpublished report to the US Fish and Service, Asheville, North Carolina. 15pp and attachments.

Wood, A. 2010. Captive propagation and field study of *Planorbella magnifica*, the Magnificent ramshorn snail and *Helisoma eucosmium*, the Greenfield ramshorn snail. Unpublished report to the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, Raleigh, North Carolina. 9pp.

Approval/Concurrence:

Lead Regions must obtain written concurrence from all other Regions within the range of the species before recommending changes, including elevations or removals from candidate status and listing priority changes; the Regional Director must approve all such recommendations. The Director must concur on all resubmitted 12-month petition findings, additions or removal of species from candidate status, and listing priority changes.

Approve:



05/28/2015

Date

Concur:



12/15/2015

Date

Did not concur:

Date

Director's Remarks: