

Fisheries Scientific Committee

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PROPOSED DETERMINATION

Nannoperca australis - Southern pygmy perch

The Fisheries Scientific Committee, established under Part 7A of the *Fisheries Management Act 1994* (the Act), is proposing to omit *Nannoperca australis* - southern pygmy perch from Part 1 of Schedule 5 Vulnerable Species of the Act and insert *Nannoperca australis* - southern pygmy perch into Part 1 of Schedule 4 Endangered Species of the Act. The amendment of the threatened species lists is provided for by Part 7A, Division 2 of the Act.

The Fisheries Scientific Committee, with reference to the criteria relevant to this species, prescribed by Part 11B of the *Fisheries Management (General) Regulation 2002* (the Regulation) has found that:

Background

1. *Nannoperca australis* - southern pygmy perch is a valid, recognised taxon and is a species as defined in the Act.
2. Southern pygmy perch, *Nannoperca australis* Günther, 1861 of the family Nannopercidae, has also been known as *Nannoperca riverinae*, *Paradules leetus*, and *Microperca tasmaniae*.
3. *Nannoperca australis* has been recorded throughout the Murrumbidgee and Murray River Systems, coastal South Australia and Victoria, King and Flinders Islands in Bass Strait and northern flowing streams in northeastern Tasmania. The species is described and figured in Kuitert, R.H., Humphries, P.A., and Arthington, A.H., 1996, Family Nannopercidae - Pygmy perches, in McDowall, R.M. (Ed.) *Freshwater Fishes of South-eastern Australia*, where details of its distribution are also given.
4. *Nannoperca australis* is a small sized fish, generally less than 85mm in length, and can live for more than 5 years. This species prefers slow-flowing waters, and still, vegetated habitats in small streams, lakes, billabongs and wetlands. Historical records show that the species was common in NSW in the Murrumbidgee catchment upstream from Narrandera and in tributaries of the Murray River.
5. *Nannoperca australis* - southern pygmy perch has the following conservation status:
 - i. NSW *Fisheries Management Act 1994*: Vulnerable;
 - ii. Commonwealth *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*: - Endangered;
 - iii. South Australia *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*; Endangered;

Criteria – reduction in abundance, geographic distribution or genetic diversity (Regulation clause 340F)

1. *Nannoperca australis* has suffered a population decline in NSW. It is now absent from the Murrumbidgee River system and the Murray River population has

contracted to a number of billabongs and small creeks in the Albury area. Recently it has also been recorded from the Holbrook area in the Billabong Creek.

2. In light of the above, the Fisheries Scientific Committee has found that the species has undergone a very large reduction in abundance within a time frame appropriate to the life cycle and habitat characteristics of the taxon; this meets the criteria of Endangered, but not Critically Endangered.

Criteria – threatening processes (Regulation clause 340G)

1. The causes of decline in *Nannoperca australis* are likely to include:
 - loss of aquatic vegetation;
 - alienation of floodplain habitats by flood mitigation works e.g., levees;
 - seasonal flow reversal;
 - spawning failures due to cold water releases from dams; and
 - predation by and competition with, introduced species such as redfin perch and gambusia.
2. In light of the above, the Fisheries Scientific Committee has found that these threatening processes continue to operate throughout the geographic distribution of the species and existing reserve systems or other forms of refuge do not protect the species.

Conclusion pursuant to section 220F(3) of the Act

In the opinion of the Fisheries Scientific Committee:

- a. *Nannoperca australis* - southern pygmy perch is facing a very high risk of extinction in New South Wales in the near future, as determined in accordance with the criteria prescribed by the Regulation as discussed above, and
- b. That it is not eligible to be listed as a critically endangered species.

The species is eligible to be listed as an ENDANGERED SPECIES.

Dr Patricia Dixon
Chair
Fisheries Scientific Committee