



November 19, 2020

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

In Re Docket: FWS-R4-ES-2020-0058

Dear Mr. Pearson:

On behalf of thousands of local community newspapers, National Newspaper Association, Alabama Press Association and Public Notice Resource Center write to familiarize you with resources available to carry out your mission under the Endangered Species Act.

We noted the comment in your recently published Federal Register notice on behalf of the possible endangered status of the frecklebelly madtom in the Upper Coosa River. We are not experts on this threatened fish, but we are experts on engaging the public in your worthy mission.

Should you determine that a public hearing on behalf of the madtom is needed, the way to reach the public is with a paid public notice in the newspapers around the Upper Coosa river region. It is not enough to send a generalized press release to media outlets in this troubled time. The pages of newspapers are tightened by COVID-19 related losses of advertising. They may not have the space to provide the federal government to alert the public to your request for information about the madtom unless you reserve it through public notice placements.

Moreover, even in thriving times, the government should observe the tenets of sound public policy notices. Notices should be accessible, verifiable, archived for later research and published at the government's directions in outlets independent of the government or any stakeholder in this discussion. These are time-honored principles in proper due process. No doubt, you are aware that readership by the general public of the Federal Register is extremely limited. It is no way to recruit the public input you want. There are six very good newspapers in the region that would be delighted to help you.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment and direct you to Felicia Mason, executive director of the Alabama Press Association at 205-871-7737. When you are ready, the association can help you quickly reach out to the newspapers in the targeted region, place the notice for you and provide you with one simple payment mechanism. She also can reach communities beyond the Alabama borders, if you determine the habitat of the madtom extends into neighboring jurisdictions. Thank you very much for taking our comments into consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Brett Wesner".

Brett Wesner
Chair
National Newspaper Association
www.nna.org

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Bradley Thompson".

Bradley Thompson
President
Public Notice Resource
Center
www.pnrc.net

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Felicia Mason".

Felicia Mason
Executive Director
Alabama Press Association
www.alabamapress.org