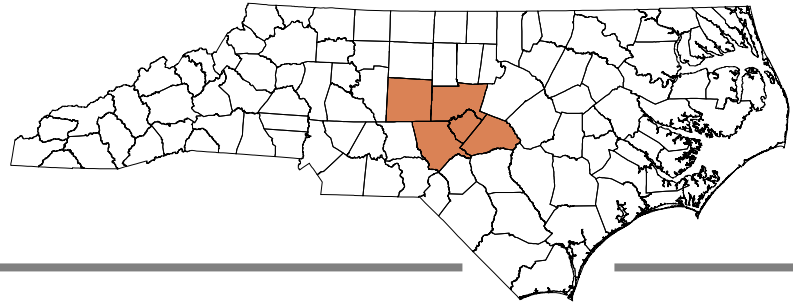

Cape Fear shiner

Notropis mekistocholas

Endangered (September 26, 1987)



Description: The Cape Fear shiner is a small minnow, rarely exceeding 2.4 inches (6 cm) in length. It is a pale silvery yellow with a black stripe along each side. The fins are yellow and pointed, the upper lip is black, and the lower lip has a thin black bar along its edge.

Life History: Unlike other members of the genus *Notropis*, the Cape Fear shiner feeds extensively on plant material and so has an elongated, convoluted intestine. No information is available on its breeding behavior or longevity. Although poorly known, spawning apparently occurs in late spring and early summer based on breeding tubercles and ovarian development of museum specimens.

Habitat: Water willow, (*Justicia americana*), beds in flowing areas of creeks and rivers appear to be an essential element of the species' habitat. It is found in clean, rocky streams over gravel, cobble, and boulder substrate; known to inhabit pools, riffles, and slow runs. Juveniles are often found in slack water, among mid-stream rock outcrops, and in side channels and pools.

Distribution: Endemic to central North Carolina in the Cape Fear drainage. This species has the most restricted distribution of any *Notropis* shiner. It is currently known from the Deep River and Rocky River within several miles of their confluence (this is the main population), in the Rocky River above the Rocky River hydroelectric dam, as well as

Robseson Creek and Bear Creek in the Rocky River system; in the Deep River system above the Highfalls Hydroelectric Reservoir, and in the lower Haw River just above Jordan Lake. It is also found a short distance up tributaries to these rivers. It was formerly found in several tributaries to the Cape Fear River in Harnett County. Three areas in North Carolina have been designated critical habitat for the Cape Fear shiner. They are in Chatham, Harnett, Lee, Moore, and Randolph counties.

Threats: Deterioration of water quality due to toxic chemical pollution, changes in stream flow, channel modification, siltation, and impoundments.

Management Recommendations: Enforcement of regulations to prevent erosion from road construction and land use changes, stream channel modification, changes to stream flow for hydroelectric power plants, impoundments, and wastewater and chemical discharges.

Sources: Lee et al. 1980, Lowe et al. 1990, USFWS 1992a.

