



# United States Department of the Interior

## Pacific Southwest Region FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Reno Fish and Wildlife Office  
1340 Financial Boulevard, Suite 234  
Reno, Nevada 89502



May 15, 2023

Desert Southwest Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit  
School of Natural Resources and the Environment  
The University of Arizona  
1064 E Lowell St  
Tucson, AZ 85719

Subject: Letter of Support for University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Dear Desert Southwest CESU members,

On behalf of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), I am writing to express my support for the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley's (UTRGV) application to join the Desert Southwest Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit (DSCESU). Partnerships with educational institutions like UTRGV are essential to support the Service's standard of using the best available science to support our mission.

In recent years, numerous potentially undescribed species of *Pyrgulopsis* springsnails (family Hydrobiidae) have been discovered among different watersheds in the deserts of the southwestern United States. The Service would like to collaborate with Dr. Kathryn Perez at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley to formally describe these species using both genetic and morphological examination. This work would support our mission of conserving and protecting species and their habitats. The results of this research will be published in peer-reviewed scientific literature and provide information for natural resource managers to determine the status and distribution of these species and identify future management needs.

Dr. Perez and UTRGV have previously worked on federally funded research projects for mollusks with the Gulf Coast CESU. She investigated a land snail from the George Washington Memorial Parkway which resulted in a report to the National Park Service and peer-reviewed publication clarifying the taxonomy of some *Oxyloma* (family Succineidae) species. Additionally, morphological examination of springsnails is a very specialized skill that has only been mastered by a handful of individuals, many of whom are now retired. The expertise provided by Dr. Perez is crucial in helping describe new springsnail species and in resolving taxonomic uncertainties.

We look forward to continued collaboration with UTRGV and know they would make a strong addition to the Desert Southwest CESU partners. As a representative of the Reno USFWS office, I am pleased to recommend the university as a non-federal member of the CESU network.

Sincerely,

Brian Croft  
Acting Field Supervisor