FINESCALE DACE (*Phoxinus neogaeus)*

Description
Finescale dace are minnows averaging up to 5 inches in length. They are stout-bodied with a single horizontal dark band along their side and a metallic silver-gold stripe above. Adults eat mainly insects and mollusks (snails and fingernail clams).

Distribution
Historically, the finescale dace was found throughout much of the central portion of the state as well as the northern panhandle. Current distribution has been reduced primarily to the Sandhills and several small tributaries of the North Platte River and South Loup River. Survey work in Cherry, Brown and Keya Paha counties in 1995-97 in Sandhill streams recorded the species in streams within the drainages of the Niobrara, North Loup, and Snake Rivers.

Habitat
The finescale dace is most commonly found in small, Sandhills streams. They are usually found at sites high in the drainage near the headwaters of the stream. Inhabited streams are usually relatively narrow, one to several yards wide, and shallow, several inches to a foot deep, with deeper pools. During the late summer or during dry periods if flows are greatly reduced or stop the fish find refuge in remaining pools. High water quality, fine sand substrate, some in-stream floating vegetation, and bank vegetation of grasses, forbs, some willows, and shrubs characterize these streams.

Status
Global: G5-Secure. Federally not listed. State Threatened. Nebraska: S2-Imperiled.
Decreased water quality such as depleted oxygen levels, increased siltation, and runoff containing chemicals and livestock waste will cause this minnow to disappear. Recent survey work has shown that the finescale dace has a limited distribution in the Sandhills, which is the primary portion of its range. No major threats are known at this time.

Management
Proper grazing management, stream bank erosion control, cautious and conservative use of pesticides near streams, as well as protecting the streams from runoff containing sediment, agricultural chemicals, and livestock waste will improve and maintain the habitat quality of the streams. Ditching and channel maintenance/cleaning can have a highly disruptive and negative impact on in-stream habitat and direct physical impact on fish. Whenever possible such activities should be avoided in stream segments with this species. If undertaken, it is recommended that ditching and channel maintenance/cleaning are limited to a quarter-mile section per year to allow for areas of escape and provide for necessary habitat. The stocking of predatory and competitive game species in stream segments or drainages to streams with the finescale dace should be prevented.