



United States Department of the Interior
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Safford District Office
711 14th Avenue
Safford, AZ 85546
(928) 348-4400



In reply refer to:
6800

May 5, 2005

CERTIFIED MAIL No. 7003 1680 0005 7418 0446
RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

Bob Broscheid
Habitat Branch
Arizona Game and Fish Department
2221 W. Greenway Rd.
Phoenix, AZ 85023-4399



Dear Mr. Broscheid:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Safford Field Office (SFO), in coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), The Nature Conservancy, Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD), Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), Arizona State Land Department (ASLD), and the U.S. Forest Service (FS), jointly and cooperatively propose to reestablish Desert Pupfish, Gila Topminnow, Loach Minnow, and Spikedace, and augment Gila Chub, Longfin Dace, Speckled Dace, Sonora Sucker, Desert Sucker, and Lowland Leopard Frog into multiple springs and streams within the watersheds of the Muleshoe Ecosystem. Field trips to the project sites took place on four different occasions with representatives from the cooperating agencies during the scoping process.

Enclosed is the combined Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and Decision Record (DR) for this project. This decision of the authorized officer is subject to appeal (43 Code of Federal Regulations Part 4). A notice of appeal must be filed with the officer who made the decision within 30 days of the date of publication or date of service [4.411(a)]. Appeals shall be addressed to: Bonnie Winslow, Assistant Field Office Manager, Safford Field Office, at 711 S. 14th Avenue, Safford, AZ 85546.

Copies of the Finding of No Significant Impact and the supporting Environmental Assessment No. AZ-040-2004-0077 is available upon request. Thank you for your involvement in this project. If you have any questions regarding this notice, please contact Heidi Blasius, SFO Fisheries biologist, at (928)348-4400 or Marlo Draper, Planning and Environmental Coordinator at (928)348-4400.

Sincerely,



Marlo Draper
Planning and
Environmental
Coordinator

Enclosure:

- FONSI/Decision Record – Muleshoe

cc

Mary Richardson, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Dr. Paul Marsh, AZ State University, School of Life Sciences
Ken Wiley, AZ Chapter of The Nature Conservancy
Stephen Williams, AZ State Land Department
Rob Clarkson, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Gerry Perry, AZ Game and Fish Department, Region V
Bob Broscheid, Habitat Branch, AZ Game and Fish Department
Rob Bettaso, Research Branch, AZ Game and Fish Department
Andrew and Stephanie Smallhouse, Carlink Ranch
Tom Orum, Saguaro-Juniper Association
Brian Hartman, C-Spear LLC

FONSI/DECISION RECORD

EA Number: AZ-040-2004-0077

Lease/Serial/Case File No. Not Applicable

BLM Office: Safford Field Office

DECISION:

It is my decision to accept the proposed action as stated in EA (AZ-040-2004-0077). This will include the reestablishment of two endangered fish species, desert pupfish (*Cyprinodon macularius macularius*), Gila topminnow (*Poeciliopsis occidentalis occidentalis*), and two threatened fish species, loach minnow (*Tiaroga cobitis*) and spikedace (*Meda fulgida*); and augmentation of one federally proposed as endangered fish species, Gila chub (*Gila intermedia*), four BLM sensitive fish species, longfin dace (*Agosia chrysogaster*), speckled dace (*Rhinichthys osculus*), Sonora sucker (*Catostomus insignis*), desert sucker (*Pantosteus clarki*), and one wildlife of special concern, lowland leopard frog (*Rana yavapaiensis*) into suitable springs and streams located within the Muleshoe Ecosystem. Preferably, this action will be initiated in the autumn of 2004 or spring 2005 and continue until these fish and frog species have been reestablished in up to three sites or it has been determined that there is a limiting factor that will not allow the fish or frog species to survive.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS:

Based upon Environmental Assessment AZ-040-2004-0077, I conclude that this action is in conformance with the approved land use plan (Safford District Resource Management Plan) and will result in no significant impact to the human environment. Therefore, preparation of Environmental Impact Statement is not necessary.

RATIONALE FOR DECISION:

The purpose of the proposed action is to assist in the recovery of two endangered fish species, desert pupfish and Gila topminnow, two threatened fish species, loach minnow and spikedace, one federally proposed as endangered fish species, Gila chub, one wildlife of special concern, lowland leopard frog, and four sensitive fish species, longfin dace, speckled dace, Sonora sucker, and desert sucker.

The project will assist in establishing and securing new reproductive, self-sustaining populations of the above mentioned species within their historical range. This is vital because the fishes of the Gila River system are all biologically imperiled to various degrees and are included on Federal, State, and BLM sensitive species lists. Likewise, ranid frogs are equally imperiled and experiencing declines and die-offs. Reasons for decline of these species are well documented in published literature and recovery plans. Introduction and spread of nonnative aquatic species continues to be a major factor in displacement of native species. Habitat destruction from a variety of human activities has been an equal interactive factor. Furthermore, Section 7(a)(1) of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) directs Federal agencies to utilize their authorities to carry out affirmative conservation programs that would recover endangered and threatened species (50

CFR 402.01). The Bureau of Land Management is directed to encourage or initiate the reintroduction of listed wildlife, fish, and plants onto suitable habitat when such actions promote recovery of the species.

The following elements have been analyzed and would not be affected: Area of Critical Environmental Concern, Wilderness, Threatened and Endangered Animals, Invasive/Noxious Plants, Livestock Grazing, Recreation, Prescribed Fire, and Land Ownership/Private Property Rights.

MITIGATION MEASURES:

Mitigation measures are recommended actions to reduce, avoid or offset the potential adverse environmental consequences of an action. The following measures would be implemented for the project:

1. The BLM shall monitor incidental take resulting from the proposed action and report to the FWS the findings of that monitoring.
 - a. BLM shall monitor the project area that could be affected by the proposed action to ascertain take of individuals of the species and/or streambank and channel degradation that could cause harm or harassment to the species. The monitoring will be accomplished in tandem with the annual monitoring described in the proposed action for use in determining the status of stocked populations of these species. Monitoring will include, at a minimum, an assessment of any streambank damage that has occurred over the past year along wetted portions of the channel currently supporting stocked fish species. Special emphasis should be placed at any road or trail crossings of the streams at these sites.
 - b. BLM shall submit annual monitoring reports to the Arizona ecological Services Office by March 15 of each year beginning in year two of project implementation. These reports shall briefly document for the previous calendar year the effectiveness of the terms and conditions and locations of listed species observed. The report shall make recommendations for modifying or refining these terms and conditions to enhance listed species protection or reduce needless hardship on the BLM.
2. The BLM shall post a sign at the trailhead near the TNC headquarters advising recreationists of the presence of threatened and endangered fish in the streams and requesting that they cross streams only as necessary and minimize damage along stream corridors.
3. BLM shall provide public information and education pertaining to Arizona's native fish and amphibians, reasons for their decline, and conservation and management tools currently being used to recover them.
4. BLM shall take no action that would result in increased grazing pressure at the proposed project sites.

5. BLM shall not allow salting within a ¼ mile of water, riparian areas, stream channels, areas of high erosion potential, or projects.
6. BLM shall conduct prescribed burns in a manner that will impact less than ½ of the watershed of any stocking site in any two-year period.

Authorized Officer: Bonnie Winslow Date: 5-2-05

Bonnie Winslow
Assistant Field Office Manager
Gila Box RNCA
Planning and Monitoring