



# News Release

Arizona Ecological Services Field Office  
2321 W. Royal Palm Road, Suite 103  
Phoenix, Arizona 85021  
602/242-0210  
602/242-2513 (Fax)

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<http://arizonaes.fws.gov>

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Contacts: Kris Randall or Jeff Humphrey (FWS) 602/242-0210  
Jim Crosswhite email at [jcrosswhite@cybertrails.com](mailto:jcrosswhite@cybertrails.com)

## **RANCHER AND FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE TEAM-UP TO RESTORE STREAM HABITAT**

Rancher Jim Crosswhite makes his living raising cattle, which requires attention to the land. Improving habitat helps increase the water supply and water quality in his streams, thus increasing livestock production. With this approach toward riparian areas, few would dispute the endangered species recovery value of the 2.5 miles of Nutrioso Creek that wind through his property called the EC Bar Ranch, located in the White Mountains of eastern Arizona.

"It makes economic sense to me as a rancher to have a sustainable water supply. The mechanism for attaining that is to restore native vegetation in the growing season, practice dormant season grazing, and other Best Management Practices. This approach benefits my livestock business while improving wildlife resources," said Mr. Crosswhite.

Mr. Crosswhite is working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service through its Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, which awards grants and provides technical assistance to private landowners seeking to create or restore wildlife habitat. The Service recognizes that habitat improvement efforts might result in the attraction of threatened or endangered species. In order to relieve landowners from the regulatory concerns that can accompany endangered species and encourage landowners to assist in species recovery, the Endangered Species Act allows the Service to permit the measured incidental "take" of protected species.

"We are too frequently barraged by anecdotes plotting ranching against endangered species protection," Arizona Ecological Service's Field Supervisor Steve Spangle said. "Crosswhite is one of many ranchers committed to demonstrating that the goals of sustainable livestock production and species recovery can be met on the same plot of land. We're anxious to support such efforts."

The Service is prepared to match Crosswhite's investment with a \$25,000 grant to restore riparian habitat on Nutrioso Creek on the 400 acre Apache County cattle operation he purchased in 1996. The money will be spent planting more than 10,000 willows, cottonwoods, alders and other native riparian plants and constructing fencing to better manage cattle and elk. These efforts are designed to stabilize soils, develop the floodplain, increase water quality and ultimately improve habitat for aquatic species and wildlife, while also benefiting ranching economics.

Additionally, Crosswhite and the Service are preparing a Safe Harbor Agreement that will protect him from regulatory responsibility if the Little Colorado spinedace or southwestern willow flycatcher, federally threatened and endangered species, increase on his property as a result of his projects. "Crosswhite is

committed to improve habitat that will contribute to recovering the spinedace and flycatcher for 50 years. Such incremental private landowner efforts are playing a vital role in restoring species for future generations," said Spangle.

Crosswhite added, "Cattle ranching and endangered species recovery can be compatible and this project is a long-term demonstration of that premise and my commitment."

The Service is seeking comments on Crosswhite's Safe Harbor Agreement and permit application until October 14, 2003. Comments should be sent to Mr. Steven L. Spangle, Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2321 West Royal Palm Road, Suite 103, Phoenix, AZ, 85021 or faxed to 602/242-2513. The Safe Harbor Agreement and permit application are available on the Internet at <http://arizonaes.fws.gov>, or by contacting the address above or calling Kris Randall at 602/242-0210.

The Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System which encompasses 542 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands, and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to State fish and wildlife agencies.

-FWS-

**NOTE TO EDITORS:**

Additional information on the Little Colorado spinedace and southwestern willow flycatcher and photo support for the species is available on the Internet at <http://arizonaes.fws.gov> (in the documents library by species).

Photographs and additional information regarding EC Bar Ranch and Jim Crosswhite's conservation efforts are available on the Internet at <http://www.ecbarranch.com>.