



# News Release

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NOTE TO REPORTERS - Photos and the recovery plan are available under <http://southwest.fws.gov/htopic.html>

## REVISED RECOVERY PLAN FOR THE GILA TROUT AVAILABLE

The Gila trout is an iridescent gold and copper colored native fish that once again inhabits sections of cold mountain streams in New Mexico and Arizona. Listed as endangered in 1967, the fish can now be found in 14 streams in the Gila, Tonto and Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests.

The Gila trout's 10 year old recovery plan was recently revised and was published in today's edition of the Federal Register, announced the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service).

New genetic and scientific information gathered since 1993 warranted revision of several components of the recovery plan, including the criteria for downlisting and delisting the species. Recovery plans are prepared for threatened and endangered species to guide federal agencies in actions that will help increase a species numbers of to a healthy level. A recovery plan, which is advisory, not regulatory in nature, contains measurable objectives, outlines site-specific management actions and estimates the time and costs required to carry out the plan.

Arizona Department of Game and Fish, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish and the Forest Service have all signed their concurrence with this plan. "The Gila trout is one of our finest examples of interagency partnership in the recovery of an endangered species," said Dale Hall, Director of the Service's Southwest Region.

"The release of the Gila Trout recovery plan is a tribute to the ongoing interagency effort designed to secure this rare native Southwestern species," said Harv Forsgren, Southwestern Regional Forester of the Forest Service.

"Numerous national forests in the southwest provide valuable habitat for the Gila trout including the Apache-Sitgreaves, Coconino, Gila and Tonto. The level of collaboration between the federal and state agencies responsible for managing this unique southwestern treasure has been terrific."

The threats facing the survival and recovery of this species are competition and hybridization with non-native trout species, improper forest and grazing management practices, severe drought, catastrophic wildfires, and floods. Recovery activities designed to alleviate the threats include establishing additional populations of Gila trout; protecting existing populations and habitat; rescuing fish if threatened by fire or drought, and continuing to obtain information needed to address conservation issues.

"This version of the recovery plan provides considerable detail on what must be accomplished to secure Gila trout," said Dr. David Propst, endangered species biologist for the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish and a member of the Gila Trout Recovery Team. "It is incumbent upon the agencies to carry out the action identified in the plan and make the promise of the recovery plan a reality."

"We are continuing our efforts to reestablish Gila trout since their reintroduction starting in 1999. We look forward to the day when they are removed from the endangered species list. Arizona is extremely fortunate to have two native salmonids - the Gila and Apache," said Scott Gurtin, a native fish biologist with the Arizona Game and Fish Department.

Copies of the plan are available from the Service by writing to the Field Supervisor, 2105 Osuna Road NE, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 87113, by calling (505) 346-2525 or visiting the website at <http://southwest.fws.gov/httopics.htm>.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife 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 nearly 540 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 78 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.

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