



## Contact

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### Stillman Lake restoration effort ready to begin

*Effort to start following 45-day appeal period*

**KINGMAN, Ariz.** – The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the Arizona Game and Fish Department – with assistance from Prescott Flycasters, The Nature Conservancy, and other volunteers – are set to begin a native fish restoration effort at Stillman Lake.

The 'lake' is actually a large pool of the Upper Verde River, and will undergo restoration and enhancement of native fish, including the razorback sucker, roundtail chub, and other native species.

"The Verde River, including its assemblage of unusually adapted desert fish, is uniquely Arizona," said Shaula Hedwall, FWS biologist. "Restoring a source population of Verde fish species is a milestone in making the river whole again and achieving species recovery."

"This is an important step in future management of native species in the Verde River," said Andy Clark, fisheries program manager for the Game and Fish Kingman office. "It's exciting to be a part of this effort."

"The lake will provide a refuge for native fish following removal of non-native predators and serve as a source of native fish for downstream areas."

Clark explained that through recurring flood events, larval and young native species will disperse downstream throughout their historical range.

"Stillman Lake currently harbors common carp and flathead catfish, which limit native species recruitment and survival. Once these species are removed, native fish will have a chance to grow and this 'sanctuary' will provide a better opportunity for survival downstream following high flows," Clark said.

Stillman Lake, part of the Game and Fish Department's Upper Verde River Wildlife Area and The Nature Conservancy's Verde River Springs Preserve south of Paulden, does not attract many anglers in relation to other regional and statewide locations for sport fish recreation.

"It's ideal for a restoration effort such as this," Clark said. "Those who enjoy sport fishing aren't going to be heavily impacted by this effort. In fact, those who use this area should be excited about the prospect of angling for roundtail chub, also known as Verde trout."

Agency personnel and local angler volunteers will make an effort to salvage native and sport fish prior to chemically removing remaining non-natives. Salvaged native fish will be moved downstream from Stillman Lake while sport fish will be relocated.

Rotenone will be used to eliminate any remaining fish. The chemical is short lived and will not impact wildlife, human populations, or fish downstream from the lake.

"The mention of chemicals is often viewed negatively," Clark stated. "However, rotenone is important in the removal of non-native fish. This project can't be successful without the removal of non-native predatory fish and this was determined to be the safest and most effective way to remove them."

The lake will be closed during the treatment period, which will be about three days. Reintroduction of native species will occur after monitoring efforts show the removal of non-native fish was successful.

The agencies met with local angler groups and conducted a public meeting, and the FWS has completed an environmental assessment and approval for the project.

On-the-ground efforts can proceed following a 45-day appeal period that concludes 5 p.m., July 27, 2009.

Those wishing to view the restoration plan should visit the FWS website at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/> or call (928) 226-0614, ext. 203.

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