



Arkansas Game and Fish Commission

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Snakehead eradication meeting Sept. 18 in Brinkley

BRINKLEY – The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will hold a town hall meeting and public hearing about eradicating northern snakehead fish at 7 p.m., Sept. 18, in Brinkley at the Convention Center.

Snakeheads, natives of Asia, were discovered in the Piney Creek watershed in Lee and Monroe counties last spring. An eradication effort is planned for this October.

The first part of the meeting will outline the need to protect the Piney Creek watershed from the fish, which eat sport fish and can survive in a wide variety of habitats and temperatures. Without control, snakehead fish will spread into the lower White River and eventually up the Mississippi River. The second part of the meeting will be open to public comments about the Piney Creek Environmental Assessment and the eradication project.

Several AGFC personnel and FWS biologists will be available during the meeting to answer questions. The eradication will be staged in three phases: treatment, short-term assessment with retreatment, and stocking of fish and long-term assessment.

Phase I: Treatment

Treatment will be conducted Sept. 29-Oct. 18, although that schedule may change because of weather and field conditions. Water will not be treated when Big Piney Creek flow exceeds 50 cubic feet per second at Buckhorn County Road Bridge.

Treatment will consist of aerial and ground application of up to 24,000 pounds of powdered rotenone and 3,000 gallons of liquid rotenone to Big Piney Creek, Little Piney Creek, tributaries, and ditches. The estimated treatment coverage is up to 4,000 acres; the area treated will depend on the amount of water present in Piney Creek.

Rotenone is a chemical commonly used to control nuisance species in fish management and has low toxicity on other wildlife.

Aerial application will consist of liquid rotenone in ditches, tributaries ponds, and lakes without tree canopies. FWS helicopter crews will conduct aerial treatment with pilots certified for rotenone application by the Arkansas State Plant Board.

The FWS has prepared an Environmental Assessment to evaluate the potential impact of providing resources to assist AGFC in its efforts. The FWS will provide about \$150,000 of in-

kind assistance to help the AGFC restore native fish in the Piney Creek watershed. Under the National Environmental Policy Act, the FWS is requesting public comments on the proposed federal action. The 30-day comment period begins on Aug. 22 and ends on Sept. 22. At the end of the comment period, the FWS will determine the extent of the federal action's impact.

Phase II: Short-term Assessment and Retreatment

Phase II will rapidly assess the success of the treatment on northern snakeheads. Retreatment will be conducted in areas where incomplete kills are suspected. This phase will begin immediately after the treatment phase and should conclude by Nov. 1.

Assessment crews will determine the success of the kill by sampling fish and looking for snakeheads. Areas with live fish may be retreated with liquid or powdered rotenone.

Phase III: Stocking and Long-term Assessment

Big Piney and Little Piney creeks will be stocked with largemouth bass, bluegill, and channel catfish. Largemouth bass and bluegill will be young-of-year, at least 3 inches long. Channel catfish will be a combination of yearlings (7-8 inches) and adults (10 inches and longer). Stocking may begin immediately following Phase II in early November and proceed through summer 2009. Stocking locations will be determined by availability of access, but attempts will be made to stock fish throughout the treatment area.

During the long-term assessment phase, the Big Piney Creek drainage will be monitored for northern snakeheads and the colonization of the treatment area by fish and other aquatic life. Long-term monitoring will begin in 2009 and continue until it's no longer necessary. The AGFC will work with local landowners to secure access permission and not interfere with farming operations.

The Environmental Assessment is available at <http://www.fws.gov/arkansas%2Des/>. Copies may be requested by calling (501) 513-4470; by fax, (501) 513-4480; by e-mail, Mark_Sattelberg@fws.gov, or by mail, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ecological Services Field Office, 110 S. Amity Road, Conway, AR 72032.

For more information about the meeting, call Keith Stephens at (501) 223-6342 or Mark Sattelberg at the FWS Conway Field Office, (501) 513-4470.