



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Nevada Fish & Wildlife Office

Preserving The Biological Diversity Of the Great Basin, Eastern Sierra & Mojave Desert

Fall/Winter
2005

Safe Harbor Agreement Signed



Stephanie Byers and Lisa Heki of the Fish & Wildlife Service and Alan Jenne of the Nevada Department of Wildlife watch Steve Thompson, Fish & Wildlife Service California Nevada Operation Manager and Terry Crawford, Director of the Nevada Department of Wildlife sign the first Safe Harbor Agreement for a migratory fish in the State of Nevada

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Nevada's first safe harbor agreement for a migratory fish was signed on November 2, 2005. Private landowners now have an opportunity to enter into agreements guaranteeing no further restrictions on the use of their land if they improve, restore, or create habitat for Lahontan Cutthroat Trout. Steve Thompson, California/Nevada Operations Manager for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and Terry Crawford, Director of the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW), signed the agreement covering privately-owned lands in the northwest portion of the state.

"Recovery of endangered species takes strong partners and cooperative landowners; it's a group effort. We're hopeful that this agreement will allow landowners to pursue the conservation ethic that comes naturally to them," said Thompson. "I would like to thank NDOW and their staff for being proactive and looking for innovative ways to further the recovery of Lahontan cutthroat trout in the State."

Threatened and endangered species often occur on private land. Safe Harbor Agreements guarantee that landowners will not incur any new restrictions on the use of their land if they improve, restore, or create habitat for endangered species.

"NDOW, as the permit holder, will be working with individual landowners to develop written agreements," explained Crawford. "These agreements will effectively hold a landowner's Endangered Species Act responsibilities at their current levels for Lahontan cutthroat trout if he or she agrees to restore, enhance, or create habitat for the species," he continued.

Because of the habits of the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout, landowner cooperation is crucial across a wide geographic area to ensure the survival and recovery of the species.

Contaminant Threat to Birds Avoided By Working Together



Whitney Mesa And Nesting Killdeer

In the arid desert climate that surrounds Henderson, Nevada, a 40 acre parcel of land called Whitney Mesa offers respite to wildlife and humans in the form of a small perennial stream bordered by thick stands of tamarisk and reed. Although the area is surrounded by residential development, it would seem that this desert oasis would be a good thing; but that's not quite the case. As it turns out, the urban runoff that feeds the Whitney Mesa channel is less than pristine. Monitoring conducted by the Service and the Southern Nevada Water Authority determined that the source for groundwater flows near Whitney Mesa has high amounts of a trace element known as selenium. Selenium is naturally occurring and is typically not a concern to people or the environment. However, irrigation practices throughout the southwest have dramatically accelerated the rate at which selenium is leached from soil. Selenium can become more concentrated as it travels up the food chain, and relatively low concentrations in water may reach toxic levels in aquatic organisms and birds. Not only are selenium levels high in the

water at Whitney Mesa, at 60 parts per billion they are the highest levels found so far in the Las Vegas Valley.

The development of a 500 unit residential community at Whitney Mesa, including enhancements to the riparian corridor was planned. Unfortunately, enhancement of the channel meant clearing vegetation, which would allow greater access for wildlife; a move that would potentially place birds at greater risk for selenium poisoning. Service biologists from the Southern Nevada Field Office were able to work with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Environmental Protection Agency, and the landowner to revise the plans so that migratory birds and wildlife were protected, while still providing a natural area for future residents of the community. The solution was both simple and economical. The urban flows were diverted into a closed system with overflow capabilities to ensure flood protection for residents — a win-win outcome for the homeowners and wildlife.

Employee In The News



Erik Orsak, Biologist at the Southern Nevada Field Office

Erik Orsak, Fish and Wildlife Biologist, heads up the Environmental Contaminants Program at the Service's Southern Nevada Field Office (SNFO). In the past seven years, this Texas native grabbed the "bull by the horns" and has established and built a successful program that is integral to the management of Trust Resources both on and off of the Service's National Wildlife Refuges. Erik's expertise and desire to work in partnership with stakeholder groups and other agencies has been instrumental in bringing the Service's perspective to the table. The cutting edge research he has been conducting in partnership with other agencies has been integral to the

operations of the SNFO. Erik's commitment to the resource was further exemplified this fall as he answered the call to assist with Hurricane Katrina Relief efforts.

Erik graduated in 1989 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology and earned a Masters of Science in 1994 from the University of North Texas. He joined the Fish and Wildlife Service in our Arlington, Texas office in 1995. After spending two years at the Tarrant County Water District, Erik returned to the Fish and Wildlife Service in Vero Beach, Florida. He joined the SNFO in February, 1999, as the first-ever contaminants specialist at that office.

Partners Create Safe Haven For Roundtail Chub

A refugia pond approximately half an acre in size has been built that will contribute to securing the long-term survival of the endangered Pahranaगत roundtail chub. The pond was constructed in 2004 by the Service, NDOW, the Service's Dexter National Fish Hatchery and Technology Center (NFH & TC), at NDOW's Key Pittman Wildlife Management Area in the Pahranaगत Valley.

The NFH & TC, the only facility to successfully spawn and propagate Pahranaगत roundtail chub in captivity, stocked the pond with the roundtail

chub in 2004 and 2005. The efforts have been successful and the fish are doing well and are spawning.

Discussions are underway with Federal, State, and local landowners to implement activities that will promote the conservation of the species. "In the interim," said Grant Webber, Service Biologist stationed at the Southern Nevada Field Office, "continued efforts from facilities such as the NFH & TC and Key Pittman Wildlife Management Area will assist in recovering of the Pahranaगत roundtail chub."



Biologists Stock Pahranaगत Roundtail Chub

Service Assists With Southern Nevada Wildfires

The Service, in partnership with numerous other agencies, worked to minimize the effects of wildfires on the Mojave population of threatened desert tortoise in Clark and Lincoln Counties during the 2005 wildfire season. Estimates are that over 800,000 acres burned. Approximately 400,000 of those acres tortoise habitat and over 66,000 acres are designated critical habitat for the tortoise.

Biologists from the Southern Nevada Field Office provide technical advice to land management agencies on how to reduce fire suppression impacts to protected species and advice on post fire restoration. Southern Nevada land managers will be seeding the burned areas with a mixture of native forbs and shrubs to prevent the germination of non-native species and to restore desert tortoise habitat .



Desert Tortoise Critical Habitat Burned In 2005 Wildfires

Pahrump Poolfish

One of the first projects funded by the Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act (SNPLMA) is keeping the Pahrump poolfish from becoming extinct. The only native fish in the Pahrump Valley, the Pahrump poolfish previously resided in the permanent springs at Manse Spring. The small fish no longer occurs in its natural habitat and has been moved to safer locations. It can now be seen in a new refugium at the Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge.

The new refugium, constructed with SNPLMA funds, consists of twin 6,500-

liter tanks with an artesian flow system. In addition to providing a safe location for the Pahrump poolfish, researchers as well as the public are able watch and learn about their life habits though viewing windows and interpretive signing. This new refugium has a population of about 200 fish.

The refugium is an example of how partners are working together to recover an imperiled species. The pupfish also occurs at Spring Mountain Ranch State Park, Las Vegas and Shohone Ponds near Ely.



Pahrump Poolfish



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US Fish & Wildlife Service
Nevada Fish & Wildlife Office
1340 Financial Boulevard, Suite 234
Reno, NV 89502

Phone: 775-861-6300
Fax: 775-861-6301

Mailing Address Line 1

Mailing Address Line 2

Mailing Address Line 3

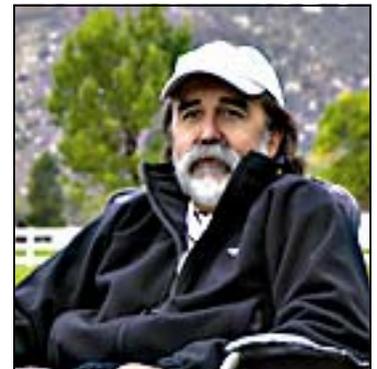
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<http://www.fws.gov/nevada>

A Message From The Field Supervisor

We have been working with our many partners over the past year to conserve Nevada's species and to protect and restore habitat throughout the State. The Safe Harbor Agreement we recently signed with the Nevada Department of Wildlife will allow us to further the recovery of Lahontan cutthroat trout with the assistance of private landowners. Our Southern Nevada Field Office has been working closely with our Ash Meadows National Wildlife refuge partners to conserve and protect the native fishes on the refuge by providing technical assistance after the wildfires that occurred there last summer. Recovering imperiled species requires many partners and private landowners working together. We are committed to looking for opportunities to work with private landowners and our partners that will benefit both the landowner and the species.



I also want to publicly acknowledge one of our employees who volunteered and played a key role in Hurricane Katrina response and clean-up efforts. I would like to thank Erik Orsak, our Environmental Contaminants Specialist, for his personal commitment and sacrifice and willingness to volunteer during this time of need.

Sincerely,

Robert D. Williams
