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News Release



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Agencies Take the First Step to Breed the Endangered Devils Hole Pupfish in Aquaria

LAS VEGAS, NEVADA...Federal and State agencies involved in efforts to prevent the extinction of the Devils Hole pupfish have successfully completed the first step toward propagating the pupfish in aquaria. On May 2, 2006, 80 hybridized pupfish from the Point of Rocks Refugia were transferred to Willow Beach Hatchery in Arizona and to Shark Reef at Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas.

“This is the first of several actions approved by Regional Managers to gain critical information for propagation techniques that can be used to increase the population of Devils Hole pupfish,” said Bob Williams, Nevada Fish and Wildlife Office Field Supervisor and Devils Hole pupfish spokesperson. “Both facilities have taken on this new challenge on top of their other priorities. We look forward to working with our new partners and value the expertise they bring to the table.”

The transfer of these hybridized pupfish is in response to the low numbers of pupfish in their natural environment at Devils Hole. Surveys conducted in April 2006, located 38 adult pupfish. Since the population was only 84 individuals in November, it was anticipated that the spring survey might also be low. While this is a record low count and the long term trend is still downward, there were a high number of young fish, indicating that there has been successful spawning. As a result of these surveys, Regional Managers from the National Park Service, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Nevada Department of Wildlife began implementing actions to reverse the downward trend in the population.

The hybridized pupfish, a cross of the Devils Hole pupfish and the Ash Meadows Amargosa pupfish, are being used by biologists to establish transportation and propagation protocols for the pure strain of Devils Hole pupfish. Both of the facilities received 40 fish each, 20 females, 10 males, and 10 juveniles. The pupfish exhibited very little stress from the transfer and eagerly began feeding on a special diet prepared by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Bozeman Fish Technology Center.

Constant monitoring of the systems and the pupfish will continue to take place over the next few weeks. Once managers determine the pupfish can survive and reproduce in aquaria, the hybridized pupfish will be replaced with the pure strain of Devils Hole pupfish. Plans are to transfer a small number of pre-juvenile fish from Devils Hole and Devils Hole pupfish from a population at the

Hoover Dam Refuge.

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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 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources 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 and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.