

# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

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Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife

WILDLIFE FEATURE

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## SPORT FISHING HAS MEANT JOBS AND INCOME TO WHITE MOUNTAIN APACHE INDIANS

Jobs and income--that's what sport fishing has meant to the White Mountain Apache Indians on the Fort Apache Reservation in Arizona.

Trout fishing--that's what the reservation has meant to sportsmen.

To the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife and the Bureau of Indian Affairs of the U.S. Department of the Interior, sport fishing on the Fort Apache Reservation is an example of how an Indian tribe has taken advantage of available fishery and engineering services to increase its income.

It all began modestly back in 1956 when the White Mountain Apache Recreation Enterprise was formed. With little capital and only ten tribal employees, the group began looking for ways to supplement the income from the tribe's cattle and lumbering operations. They saw the possibilities of sport fishing on the reservation as another way to provide both jobs and income for their people.

So the tribe called upon the fishery knowledge of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife and the engineering skills of the Bureau of Indian Affairs to teach them how to develop and manage their waters for sport fishing. BSFW also supplied suitable stock from Williams Creek and Alchesay National Fish Hatcheries located on the reservation.

The Apaches learned so readily that the White Mountain sport fishing operation attracted more than 440,000 fishing visits to the reservation in 1969. Anglers spent over \$1.1 million for tribal services, including \$160,000 for fishing permits. More than 125 recreation-related jobs were generated which paid wages equal to those of off-reservation salaries.

Building on its success, the tribe has plowed much of its profits back into additional fishing and related facilities.

The tribe's work has been of such a high caliber that in April of this year, Interior Secretary Walter J. Hickel gave it the Department's Conservation Service Award, for efforts that included preserving the endangered Apache trout. In his letter of congratulations sent to tribal chairman Fred Banashley, Sr., Secretary Hickel wrote:

"The tribe improved reservation streams which are the natural homes for these fish, constructed fish-tight stream barriers to prevent possible hybridization, built lakes to safeguard isolated populations, and has carried on a sport fishing program on the reservation which allowed Indian and white man alike the rare privilege of taking this beautiful fish."

Cool temperatures, a highland setting, and good fishing will combine to bring in about \$1.5 million in 1970 to the White Mountain Apaches. With present demand for services exceeding the tribe's ability to meet it, facilities will be expanded. Income from this source alone may be as high as \$3.5 million by 1980, provided largely by Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas sportsmen eager to escape searing summer temperatures at home for trout on a reservation.

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