



News Release

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www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/

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TWO COCHISE COUNTY RANCHERS TO AID ENDANGERED SPECIES

The operators of the BarBoot and 99 Bar ranches, and the Fish and Wildlife Service have developed a plan to assist in the recovery of six Endangered Species Act-protected species on the private ranchlands in southeastern Cochise County, Arizona. The draft Leslie Canyon Watershed Safe Harbor Agreement will establish a conservation program for the threatened beautiful shiner, Chiricahua leopard frog, Yaqui catfish, and the endangered Yaqui chub, Yaqui topminnow and Huachuca water umbel – an aquatic plant.

The agreement seeks to assist species recovery by reestablishing species populations, restoring and maintaining habitat by improving watershed conditions upstream from Leslie Canyon National Wildlife Refuge (LCNWR) and providing for the natural expansion of the species into improving habitats in the upper watershed.

The two ranches include 24,585 acres in the upper Leslie Canyon watershed downstream from the Coronado National Forest Boundary and upstream from the LCNWR. The ranchers will work to enhance and maintain the portion of the Leslie Canyon watershed through watershed improvements, such as partial fencing, erosion control activities, and other riparian and hydrologic improvements. Ongoing land use activities, watershed improvement activities, and species management and monitoring activities are part of the agreement and would be permitted under the Endangered Species Act.

Because many endangered and threatened species occur primarily or exclusively on private land, it is critical to involve private landowners in their conservation and recovery. Many landowners want to take action to help conserve these species on their property, but are concerned about potential land use restrictions that may occur if listed species begin to colonize or expand their numbers as a result of conservation actions. Due to these concerns, some landowners may limit land and water management practices that could enhance and maintain habitat for listed species.

To allay those concerns and provide landowners with both management flexibility and regulatory certainty, the Service developed the Safe Harbor program. Under this program, the Service initiates Safe Harbor Agreements with willing landowners who agree to provide habitat for listed species. The Service first establishes a "baseline" status for the species on the property, and develops an agreement under which the landowner agrees to undertake management actions that, directly or indirectly, will contribute to the recovery of the species.

In return for these efforts, the Service issues an "enhancement of survival" permit that provides assurances that, when the agreement's term ends, the participating landowner may use the property in any otherwise legal manner that ensures that it stays at or above the baseline conditions established when the agreement

began. As part of the agreement, the Service issues a permit allowing incidental take of individual plants or animals and habitat modifications that could return the property to conditions agreed upon as baseline.

Comments on the draft agreement are being sought through June 10, 2008, and should be submitted to the Refuge Manager, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, San Bernardino/Leslie Canyon National Wildlife Refuges, P.O. Box 3509, Douglas, Arizona 85608. Copies of the draft agreement and relevant documents can be downloaded from <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/> and paper copies can be requested from Bill Radke, Leslie Canyon National Wildlife Refuge Manager, at (520) 364-2104.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov.

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Note to Editors:

Photographs of the relevant species are available at http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/Image_Lib.htm or by contacting Bill Radke at 520/364-2104 or Jeff Humphrey at 602/242-0210 x222.
