



News Release

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

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CITY OF PHOENIX REQUESTS ENDANGERED SPECIES PERMIT FOR RIO SALADO

The City of Phoenix is developing habitat in its portion of the Rio Salado Environmental Restoration Project that could be suitable for four birds that are protected under the Endangered Species Act (Act). The city plans to enhance and maintain 595 acres of native wetland and riparian vegetation on a portion of the Salt River from 24th St. to 19th Ave. that could attract endangered brown pelicans, southwestern willow flycatchers and Yuma clapper rails and threatened bald eagles. Three other rare species – the Gila topminnow, desert pupfish and cactus ferruginous pygmy-owl – may also benefit from habitat developed by the City.

The City has drafted a [Safe Harbor Agreement](#) and applied to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for an endangered species enhancement of survival permit. The draft Safe Harbor Agreement spells out how habitat will be restored and maintained. In 2008, the [City of Tempe](#) completed a Safe Harbor Agreement for habitat creation and maintenance in its portion of the Rio Salado upstream of Phoenix.

“If you build it – they will come’ frequently applies to habitat restoration and endangered species,” said Steve Spangle, the Service’s Arizona Field Supervisor. “The City of Phoenix is to be commended for its effort to restore habitat that could eventually accommodate native species and contribute to their recovery. The Endangered Species Act encourages such efforts and has the flexibility to alleviate any regulatory concerns which land stewards, like the City of Phoenix, might otherwise have.”

The Service recognizes that habitat improvement efforts might result in the attraction of threatened or endangered species. In order to relieve landowners from the regulatory concerns that can accompany endangered species and encourage landowners to assist in species recovery, the Act allows the Service to permit the measured incidental "take" of protected species.

The City’s habitat efforts may someday allow for the reintroduction of two endangered fish species – the Gila topminnow and desert pupfish. Reintroductions of the fish could be permitted under a statewide Safe Harbor Agreement already developed with the Arizona Game and Fish Department. The City’s draft agreement also considers the possibility of cactus ferruginous pygmy-owls utilizing the habitat. The pygmy-owl is not currently protected under the Act, but the Service is currently evaluating a petition to add it to the list of protected animals.

The Service is seeking comments on Phoenix’s draft Safe Harbor Agreement through April 10, 2009. Comments should be sent to the Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Arizona Ecological Services Office, 2321 West Royal Palm Road, Suite 103, Phoenix, Ariz. 85021-4951 or faxed to (602) 242-

2513. The draft agreement and relevant documents are available on the Service's Web site at www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona or by request at (602) 242-0210.

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