



# News Release

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Arizona Ecological Services Office <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/>

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## City of Phoenix Agrees to Manage Tres Rios to Aid Endangered Species

The Tres Rios Nature Festival is an annual event at the City of Phoenix Tres Rios Project, but the underlying philosophy lasts year round. The City of Phoenix is developing and maintaining habitat at the [Tres Rios Environmental Restoration Project](#) that is suitable for the endangered southwestern willow flycatcher and Yuma clapper rail. The City has committed to maintain approximately 927 acres of native wetland and riparian vegetation on portions along the Salt and Gila rivers that could currently attract and support these bird species, and is expected to continue to improve.

The City completed a [Safe Harbor Agreement](#) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service approved an endangered species enhancement of survival permit. The Safe Harbor Agreement spells out how habitat will be restored and maintained.

“Phoenix should be commended for establishing and maintaining habitat, as well as assisting in endangered species recovery in a major metropolitan area,” said Steve Spangle, Field Supervisor with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Arizona. “Like the neighboring Rio Salado Project, the Tres Rios Project offers a quiet, natural retreat for the public and is anticipated to provide a safe harbor to flycatchers and clapper rails, as well as bald eagles and the proposed yellow-billed cuckoo.”

Because many endangered and threatened species occur primarily or exclusively on private land – including land held by municipalities like the City of Phoenix’s Tres Rios Project – 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 animals and habitat modifications that could return the property to conditions agreed upon as baseline.

The Tres Rios Project area currently provides some habitat for southwestern willow flycatchers, Yuma clapper rails, yellow-billed cuckoos, and bald eagles. It is anticipated that the City's commitments will facilitate the continued improvement of habitat for flycatchers, clapper rail, yellow-billed cuckoos, and bald eagles. It is believed that on-going cottonwood and willow planting programs and marshland development will continue to attract these species.

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](http://www.fws.gov).

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