



# News Release

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Arizona Ecological Services Field Office <http://www.fws.gov/arizonaes/>

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## **WILDLIFE AGENCIES SEEK COMMENTS ON PROPOSAL TO REMOVE NON-NATIVE SPECIES FROM FOUR SAN RAFAEL VALLEY STOCK TANKS**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is proposing to remove non-native bullfrogs and fish species from four stock tanks in the San Rafael Valley of Santa Cruz County early this summer. The removal of non-native species at four locations is a pilot program to investigate the feasibility of eliminating non-native competitors and predators to assist the recovery of the endangered Sonora tiger salamander and a suite of other southwest natives. The tanks were selected because their isolation would lower the likelihood of reinvasion by exotics

Three of the stock tanks (Rosemary, Bill Woods and Dan tanks) are on Coronado National Forest lands and the fourth (Upper 21 Tank) is on the privately owned San Rafael Ranch. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Arizona Game and Fish Department, and USDA Forest Service have coordinated efforts with area livestock operators.

The plan calls for the removal of exotics, two years of monitoring the survival of native species and continued coordination among participants to ensure issues and concerns are addressed appropriately. The water level in tanks may be drawn down prior to using nets to remove native species. The same mechanical means plus giggering and possibly the chemical rotenone would be employed to remove exotics. Rotenone is a naturally occurring substance derived from the roots of several tropical plants in the bean family and has been used for centuries to capture fish in areas where these plants are naturally found. Rotenone is not harmful to humans or cattle. Following treatment, the rotenone would be neutralized with potassium permanganate and the native species would then be returned to the stock tanks.

“We hope to treat the ponds prior to monsoon season when water sources in San Rafael Valley are low; that would make this logistically feasible and allow for the summer rains to refill the treated tanks,” said Jim Rorabaugh, Fish and Wildlife Service supervisory biologist and project lead. “Native species, such as Sonora tiger salamander, Gila topminnow, Gila chub, Chiricahua leopard frog and Mexican gartersnake will benefit from renovating these tanks. What we learn from this effort could assist an even broader group of our native species.”

The Service is seeking comments on the proposed plan. A draft environmental assessment is available online at <http://www.fws.gov/arizonaes/> or by contacting the Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2321 W. Royal Palm Road, Ste. 103, Phoenix, AZ 85021 (602-242-0210). Comments on the draft environmental assessment can be submitted to this address or by fax (602-242-2513). Comments must be received by May 17, 2006.