

**U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE AND ARIZONA GAME AND FISH  
DEPARTMENT**

**JOINT NEWS RELEASE**

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**Contact**

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**Public comments sought on Arizona fish stocking program  
so it can continue to receive federal funding in the future**

PHOENIX – Did you know that the feisty rainbow trout dancing on the end of your fishing line was most likely hatchery raised?

Each year, the Arizona Game and Fish Department stocks more than 3 million fish for anglers to catch in approximately 160 of Arizona's lakes, rivers and streams – mostly rainbow, Apache, brook, and cutthroat trout, but some warmwater species such as largemouth bass and channel catfish as well.

The stocking program is supported with federal funds through the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Program, along with state funds from the sale of licenses and trout stamps.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Arizona Game and Fish Department are seeking public comments on issues associated with all the sport-fish stockings in the state as part of a draft environmental assessment process that is required to continue using federal funding for stocking activities in Arizona.

Public input is being sought to determine the extent and variety of issues that should be addressed by the draft environmental assessment. The comment period continues through 5 p.m. on Dec. 19.

Once the comment period ends, the wildlife agencies will prepare a draft environmental assessment to evaluate the social, economic and environmental effects of stockings related to continue funding for the program through the Sport Fish Restoration Program.

As part of the scoping process, the following three public open houses are being held to answer questions and gather public input on the stocking program issues:

- **Pinetop**, 6:30 p.m. Nov. 17, Arizona Game and Fish Department Region 1 office, 2878 E. White Mountain Blvd.
- **Tucson**, 6:30 p.m. Nov. 24, Arizona Game and Fish Department Region 5 office, 555 N. Greasewood Road.

- **Phoenix**, 6:30 p.m. Nov. 25, at Arizona Game and Fish Department Headquarters, 5000 W. Carefree Highway.

“While we will be at the public meetings to provide background information and answer questions, all comments to be formally considered must be made in writing,” said Weedman.

**Written comments can be sent to either:**

David Weedman, Aquatic Habitat Program Coordinator, Arizona Game and Fish Department, 5000 W. Carefree Highway, Phoenix, AZ 85086. E-mail: [fishaz@azgfd.gov](mailto:fishaz@azgfd.gov).

Harold Namminga, Sport Fish Restoration Grant Administrator, Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, P.O. Box 1306, Albuquerque, NM 87103. E-mail: [Harold\\_Namminga@fws.gov](mailto:Harold_Namminga@fws.gov).

All comments must be submitted in writing no later than 5 p.m. on Dec. 19.

Weedman pointed out that recreational angling in Arizona totaled 4,156,000 angling days in 2006, creating a statewide economic impact of more than \$1.1 billion annually.

Arizona’s natural fish fauna historically consisted of 36 species of fish, only a few of which were traditionally sought by early Americans for sport fishing, which is a trend that continues today.

Since the early 1900s, the Arizona Game and Fish Department and other agencies have supplemented recreational angling opportunities by stocking state waters with sport fish species.

“Fish stockings have evolved over the past 100 years or so to meet growing needs of anglers in Arizona,” Weedman said. “Now we consider a wide range of factors when determining where and when to stock fish, including biology, angler use, partnership commitments and needs, native fish impacts and social demands.”

Although most of the trout species caught in Arizona likely come from fish hatcheries, most of the warmwater species in the state – especially those in the larger impoundments such as Roosevelt Lake – come from natural reproduction.

The federal funding apportioned to Arizona is authorized under the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act of 1950, commonly referred to as the Dingell-Johnson Act and Wallop-Breaux Act. It provides federal aid to state wildlife agencies for management and restoration of sport fish.

These Sport Fish Restoration funds are derived from a federal excise tax at the manufacturing level on certain items of sport-fishing tackle, fishing equipment and motor boat fuel.

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