

When rain and snow runoff conditions again replenish water-stores required by Valley residents and industries, new delta habitat will be periodically inundated. This refilling of the reservoir will adversely affect the protected birds' habitat and will result in the harassment, harm, and possible death of some birds. SRP has developed the Roosevelt Habitat Conservation Plan (RHCP) to minimize and mitigate (offset) impacts to the species and their habitat associated with the filling and continued operation of Roosevelt. SRP will submit a finalized RHCP to the Service in anticipation of Service approval of the plan and issuance of a permit for the incidental take of the listed birds on a time line that will allow the reservoir to be filled with this coming winter's runoff.

The Service and SRP have prepared a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to analyze the physical, biological, social, and economic effects of the proposed RHCP and its reasonable alternatives.

Ultimately, the draft RHCP seeks to minimize and mitigate the "take" of 750, 5, and 313 acres of flycatcher, Yuma clapper rail, and cuckoo habitat (respectively) resulting from filling of Roosevelt Lake and to not appreciably reduce the likelihood of the species' survival in the wild. SRP proposes to achieve this by:

- Acquiring and managing in perpetuity at least 1500 acres of riparian habitat along the Verde, San Pedro, and Gila rivers including establishing 20 or more acres of riparian habitat near Roosevelt (approximately 820 of these acres have already been or will be acquired by Bureau of Reclamation).
- Implementing other conservation measures equivalent to at least 750 acres of riparian habit including: 1) managing and protecting habitat at or near Roosevelt; 2) dedicating water rights that will benefit protected riparian habitat; and 3) providing buffers to protect riparian areas from adverse land uses.
- Long-term monitoring of flycatchers, Yuma clapper rails, bald eagles, and cuckoos; and biological monitoring at Roosevelt and each mitigation site.

Developing the RHCP and EIS is a public process and the Service and SRP seek public comment and participation. The draft EIS and draft RHCP are available at <http://arizonaes.fws.gov>. A public meeting to solicit comments related to the draft RHCP and EIS, and issuance of an incidental take permit will be held on August 27, 2002, from 6:00-9:00 p.m. at the offices of Salt River Project, 1521 Project Dr. (Galvin Pkwy. and Van Buren St.), Tempe, Ariz. Comments and requests for hard copies of the draft documents, and should be sent to Mr. Steven L. Spangle, Acting Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2321 W. Royal Palm Rd., Ste 103, Phoenix, AZ 85021, (602) 242-0210. All comments should be sent to Mr. Spangle by September 17, 2002.

For further information on the Roosevelt Habitat Conservation Plan contact Mr. John Keane, Executive Policy Analyst, SRP, P.O. Box 52025, PAB355, Phoenix, AZ 85072-2025, (602) 236-5087.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 93-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System which encompasses more than 520 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 66 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 78 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

<<http://arizonaes.fws.gov>>

Note to Editors: Photographs of the affected species are available on the Service's website at <http://arizonaes.fws.gov> or by request from the listed contacts. B-roll of flycatchers and Roosevelt Lake habitat is available by contacting Wes Keyes at Arizona Game and Fish Department (602-789-3230).