



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Arizona Strip Field Office
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May 14, 2008

In Reply Refer To:
2800 (AZ-110)
AZA-34611

Dear Interested Party:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is inviting public comments on a proposal from Washington County Water Conservancy District on behalf of the Virgin River Resource Management and Recovery Program (Virgin River Program) to construct a fish barrier on the Virgin River, approximately 15 miles south of the Utah–Arizona border. The proposed fish barrier would prevent the upstream migration of non-native fish that threaten the recovery of fish native to the Virgin River, including the endangered woundfin (*Plagopterus argentissimus*) and Virgin River chub (*Gila seminuda*). The proposed project would be located within the Virgin River Gorge, near milepost 15 on Interstate 15. The fish barrier would extend across the full width of the Virgin River channel and would be approximately 70 feet wide and would range from 5 feet to 6.29 feet high. The barrier would be constructed of steel-reinforced concrete designed to withstand a 100-year flood. A gated access road would also be constructed as part of the proposed project in order to provide access during both construction and operation of the fish barrier. The access road would initially be constructed to a width of 14 feet, but following construction of the fish barrier would be reduced to a width of 12 feet. The access road would be cut into the existing riprap and would extend from the fish barrier to the shoulder of northbound Interstate 15. The proposed project would involve a temporary 0.88-acre construction right-of-way (ROW) that would consist of 0.53 acres (40 x 580 feet) along Interstate 15 for construction access and staging, 0.14 acres (14 x 450 feet) for the access road, and 0.21 acres (68 x 137 feet) in the riverbed for construction of the fish barrier. Following construction, a 0.21-acre permanent ROW would be needed for future operation, maintenance, and repair. The permanent ROW would consist of 0.12 acres (12 x 450 feet) for the access road and 0.09 (60 x 68 feet) for the fish barrier.

The BLM's Arizona Strip Field Office will be preparing an environmental analysis to disclose the environmental impacts associated with this proposal. The findings of the analysis will assist with BLM's decision-making process and will help to satisfy federal legal mandates, including the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act and the Endangered Species Act.

How You Can Participate: The BLM is now identifying issues that should be considered in the environmental analysis. You are encouraged to provide us with your comments during a 30-day scoping period that will close on June 14, 2008. This will ensure that your input is considered during the preparation of the analyses and that you are on our mailing list to be notified of the availability of the environmental analysis.

Comments, including names and street addresses of respondents, will be available for public review at BLM's Arizona Strip Field Office and will be subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and may be published as part of the analysis and other related documents. Individual respondents may request confidentiality. If you wish to withhold your name or street address from public review and disclosure under the FOIA, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your written comment. Such requests will be honored to the extent allowed by law. All submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, will be made available for public inspection in their entirety.

Interested persons, organizations, and agencies are encouraged to comment on the scope of the analysis of the proposed action, and on specific issues the analysis should address. Please submit your comments in writing by June 14, 2008 to: Tom Denniston, BLM, Arizona Strip Field Office, 345 East Riverside Drive, St. George, Utah 84790.

Based upon issues identified, the BLM will assess the appropriate level of environmental analysis and documentation. Thank you for your time and continued involvement in public lands management.

If you have questions about this project, you may contact Tom Denniston, Wildlife Biologist, at (435) 688-3385.

Sincerely,

Lorraine M. Christian

Lorraine M. Christian
Field Manager