



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Arizona Fishery Resources Office
Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program
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August 24, 2006

James W. Crosswhite
EC Bar Ranch
PO Box 44
Nutrioso, AZ 85932

Dear Mr. Crosswhite,

The riparian restoration practices implemented in Nutrioso Creek on the EC Bar Ranch, including water quality and aquatic/wildlife habitat improvements have created an ideal natural aquatic habitat to relocate the Little Colorado River spinedace, captured in degraded (lack of sufficient water) pools downstream on the Apache Sitgreaves National Forest. In May 2006, Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) staff salvaged approximately 767 Little Colorado River spinedace from degraded habitat on U.S. Forest Service property and repatriated them to perennial habitat on the EC Bar Ranch¹. **The practice of salvaging a listed species from public land and repatriating the species to private land is rarely warranted and demonstrates your commitment to threatened and endangered species. AGFD and the Service recognize that this practice can only occur because of the quality of habitat your reach of Nutrioso Creek provides. In fact, it may be the only instance where this has occurred in Arizona with a federally listed fish species.**

Apparently, your three step approach of implementation, maintenance, and protection to improve aquatic and wildlife habitat on the EC Bar Ranch has proven successful. Through your utilization of the Service's Partners for Fish & Wildlife Program to improve wildlife and aquatic habitat you have brought the Little Colorado River spinedace one step closer to recovery, which is consistent with the Little Colorado River Spinedace Recovery Plan published in 1998.


The practices that you implemented were completed as agreed upon in the Partners in Fish & Wildlife grant proposal and resulted in successful outcomes. The Safe Harbor Agreement naturally ensued which is entitled: Voluntary Enhancement and Restoration Activities Benefiting the Southwest Willow Flycatcher and Little Colorado River Spinedace in Nutrioso Creek. This is the first and so far the only agreement to be created in Arizona between the Service and a private landowner.

After wildlife habitat improvement practices are implemented, there becomes an ongoing need to maintain, repair, and improve on those successful practices. This is especially important in a perennial stream like Nutrioso Creek where less frequent high flows alternate with predominant low flows the rest of the year. Under such conditions, minor practice flaws or miscalculations may be more likely to result in failure of a project. For example, low flows during the growing season can result in poor vigor in the planted willows, stunted growth, and/or death, thus reducing fish and wildlife habitat. To help meet maintenance objectives, the Service encourages enrollment through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Conservation Security Program (CSP). The CSP provides annual funding for maintenance of existing soil quality, water quality, and wildlife habitat practices to eligible private landowners meeting national stewardship criteria.

Riparian area management is critical to species recovery objectives. The Service encourages the adoption of sustainable management activities consistent with wildlife habitat conservation values, which may include creation of a conservation easement. Qualified organizations often apply for Service Section 6 funding to help create conservation easements.

The Service is very appreciative of the ongoing collaborative sustainable partnership with you and the EC Bar Ranch. It is always a pleasure to visit the EC Bar Ranch and see the riparian areas and grasslands adjacent to Nutrioso Creek thriving. We appreciate your efforts so much that we would like to showcase your projects as part of the 20th Anniversary of the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program. Thank you for conserving the rare and ecologically significant resources of Arizona and please feel free to contact the Service if you have any questions or comments.

Sincerely,



Stewart Jacks
Project Leader

¹ Carter, C. et al. 2006. Arizona Game & Fish Department - Region 1 - Nutrioso Creek Spinedace Salvage/Repatriation Report