

Ref: Wildlife Restoration Federal Compliance Approval for AZ FW100-P-24  
EAC # M 15-0723101721

**Project Approach:** *Tonto National Forest Lakes Habitat Improvement Project*

Artificial habitat structures that will be used in all of the lakes to increase fish habitat and improve the fishery include concrete fish balls, brush bundles, Mossback Structures, Georgia cubes, poly shrubs, and Fishiding structures. Additional structures from the *Catalogue of Reservoir Fish Habitat Structures* may also be used during the implementation of the habitat project as needed and as monitoring and adaptive management provide additional information on structure effectiveness and project success. The artificial habitat improvement projects at each lake will follow similar approaches. Natural and artificial materials will be placed on the lakebed to improve fish habitat, concentrate fish and improve angler catch rates.

The Department, with the help of volunteers, proposes to build and deploy habitat at Roosevelt, Apache, Canyon, Saguaro, and Bartlett Lakes. Structures identified in the *Catalogue of Reservoir Structures* will be used to enhance the current habitat conditions. All structures will be deployed from a boat and placed below the waterline or placed on exposed shore above the waterline during low water conditions. Existing roads and ramps will be used to launch boats at the lakes to access habitat locations. No ground vehicles will be driven where vehicles have not historically been operated.

There will be no excavations and no disturbance of any ground surface, above or below the water. Ground surface disturbance will be limited to structures settling to the bottom of the lake from a water surface deployment strategy, or shoreline of the lake above water line at that time, but below the conservation pool elevation for each lake.

The USFS identified the following design features for public safety and resource protection that will be incorporated into project implementation:

*Public Safety*

1. All structures will be deployed from a boat and placed below the waterline or placed on exposed shore above the waterline during low water conditions.
2. All structures will be weighted to the lakebed to ensure they do not move or float to the surface after placement. All structures will be placed to minimize, to the maximum extent possible, conflicts with other recreational activities.
3. Fish habitat sites would be marked, as appropriate, for safety. Additionally, Arizona Game and Fish Department will provide online maps of habitat improvement sites.
4. Structures will be grouped to increase angler access and harvest.
5. Fish structures will not be placed in locations where cliff diving is popular at Saguaro and Canyon lakes.
6. Fish structures will not be placed within 500 feet horizontal distance away from high water mark (2151) near recreation sites at Roosevelt Lake only.
7. Fish structures will not be placed at narrow choke points.

*Resource Protection*

8. The fish habitat project will use existing roads and ramps to launch boats at the lake and access habitat locations. There will be no excavations above or below the waterline. Ground surface disturbance will be limited to structures settling to the bottom of the lake from a surface

deployment by boat, or shoreline deployment above the water line by hand and foot following delivery by boat or delivery by vehicle using existing roads.

9. Fish structures will not be placed within 300 feet from boundaries of areas with closures or restrictions for wildlife such as geese, bald eagle nesting sites, willow flycatchers, and riparian areas (i.e. Tonto Creek)..
10. Fish structures will not be placed directly below cliff bald eagle nesting sites.
11. Fish structures will not be placed in wake zones near bald eagle nesting habitat at Saguaro and Canyon lakes.
12. Fish structures will not be placed in locations where cliff diving is popular at Saguaro and Canyon lakes.
13. Fish structures will not be placed within 500 feet horizontal distance away from high water mark (2,151 feet) near recreation sites at Roosevelt Lake only.
14. Fish structures will not be placed at narrow choke points.
15. If previously undiscovered cultural resources (historic or prehistoric objects, artifacts, or sites) are exposed as a result of operations, all work must immediately cease and Globe Ranger District Office ((928) 402-6200] shall be notified. Operations will not proceed at that location until further direction is received from the Forest Archaeologist that provisions for resolving adverse effects as required by 36 CFR 800 have occurred.
16. Closure activities will be conducted in a manner that protects and conserves forest resources to the greatest extent possible by using equipment (i.e., front end loaders, tractors, haul trucks, etc.) that is appropriately sized and/or is the smallest equipment practical to accomplish the work; limiting all forms of surface disturbance to the greatest extent possible; ensuring that equipment remains on existing roads and/or previously disturbed areas; and taking all necessary precautions to protect flora, fauna, and cultural resources.

The Department and the TNF will develop an Agreement for "Habitat Placement Criteria" in the lakes to ensure public safety in habitat location selection and placement, as well as, establish a buoy marking system for any structures that are considered or become considered a hazard to public safety.

#### **SITE ACCESS**

Roosevelt Lake has six major public boat ramps: Indian Point, Challa Bay, Windy Hill (2), Grapevine, and Schoolhouse. Apache Lake has two major public boat ramps: Apache Lake Marina and Resort, and Burnt Corral. Canyon Lake has two major boat ramps: Palo Verde and Laguna. Saguaro Lake has two major public boat ramps: Ramp 1 and Ramp 2. Bartlett Lake has two major public boat ramps: Jojoba and Yellow Cliffs.

All access to enhancement areas will be done from boats, except for those areas that are accessible via existing roads or at campgrounds and recreation areas. Structures will be focused to increase angler access and harvest, including areas closed to motorboat access and areas near already established fishing piers.

#### **Endangered Species Act Determinations:**

NLAA – disturbance is short term and temporary in duration

**NEPA Determinations:**

No extraordinary circumstances were triggered by this project so NEPA compliance for these projects has been determined by WSFR to be a categorical exclusion as provided by 516 DM 8, Appendix 1 and/or 516 DM 2, Appendix 1.

B (3) The construction of new, or the addition of, small structures or improvements, including structures and improvements for the restoration of wetland, riparian, instream, or native habitats, which result in no or only minor changes in the use of the affected local area.

**NHPA:** No ground disturbing activities.



Grant Manager

Date 12/06/2016