



ATTENTION



PUBLIC INFORMATION REGARDING THE SILVER CREEK FISH HATCHERY

Silver Creek Fish Hatchery: A unique property for wildlife recreation in the White Mountains.

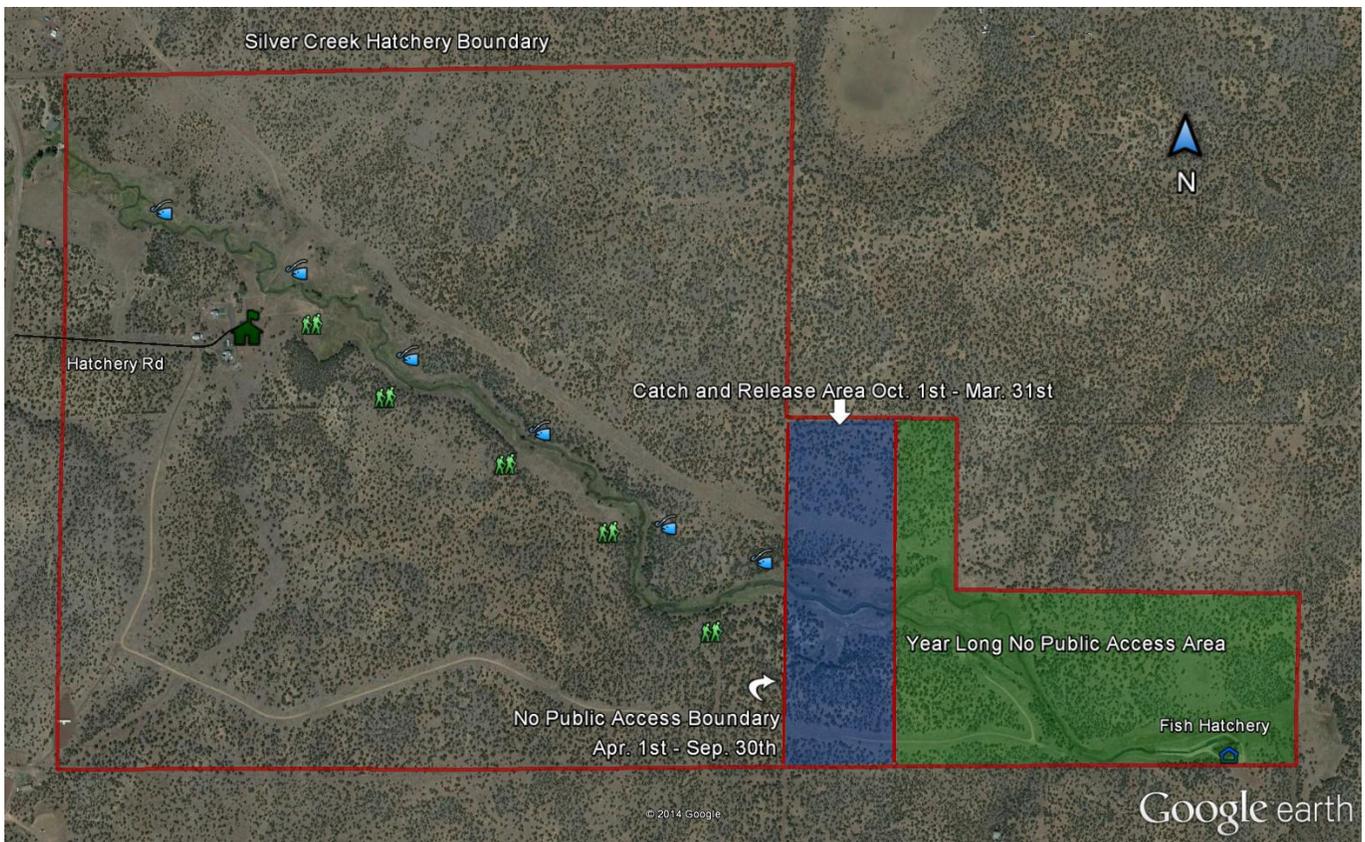
In 1978, the Arizona Game and Fish Commission acquired 871 acres of land along Silver Creek in Navajo County to ensure the continuing operation of an established fish hatchery on the property, while providing compatible natural resource recreational opportunities for the public. The property is managed by the Arizona Game and Fish Department to grow quality fish for angling opportunities.

The centerpieces of the property are the two natural springs that give rise to Silver Creek. The water quality and quantity from these springs has allowed the Department to raise trout at two small separate facilities and supply those fish to lakes and streams in the White Mountains and Silver Creek itself. To accomplish this efficiently and safely, access to the actual springs and fish-rearing structures on Silver Creek is restricted to the public year round. This is a common practice at any fish hatchery where oversight of public visitors at the hatchery is not feasible due to the layout of employee housing and maintenance facilities. Let's face it, the sight of trout -- and we are talking about a lot of trout -- is sometimes too big of a temptation for some people to pass up! Public access must be managed to ensure healthy fish production that results in fishing opportunities for all. The Department understands the impact that has on the local recreating public. So, the Department has attempted to balance access and fish production when developing management strategies for the Silver Creek Hatchery. We have engaged the public and local conservation groups to develop innovative strategies to try and meet the desires of local fishermen. It has not been easy, however, we feel that working with our constituents is critical to successful wildlife conservation.

The Silver Creek property currently hosts a split fishing season to accommodate anglers interested in traditional fishing tackle and bag limits, while also providing for a true quality trout fishing opportunity through a fly-and-lure-only catch-and-release season during which no trout may be kept, all trout must be immediately released unharmed. The only way to develop a quality fishing area is to allow trout to grow to an age where they attain the size that provides this type of experience. This is also accomplished by restricting the removal of trout from the stream for half of the year and allowing only artificial flies and lures. For the remainder of the year, anglers are allowed to use all tackle including bait, and the limit is six trout per day for each licensed angler. Access is limited during the traditional tackle season. We have implemented this type of management strategy to allow growth and survival of larger trout in portions of the creek in a more natural environment than a concrete raceway.

As the White Mountain Community has grown over the years, so have the demands and pressure on the Silver Creek Hatchery. County roads adjacent to the fish hatchery can provide unscrupulous individuals with access to the hatchery. While it would be easy to focus on the negative issues involving a few individuals, it is also important to recognize the positive outcomes and community opportunities the Department has fostered by working with the White Mountain Fly Fishing Club and other folks to host numerous fishing clinics for school kids, an annual streamside fishing "festival" on opening day (Oct. 1), and Wounded Warrior Foundation fishing clinics to provide our veterans with a quality fishing experience. The Department welcomes you to stop by and meet Hatchery Manager Ken McGown to learn more about hatchery operations, its mission and purpose.

The Arizona Game and Fish Department wants to let everyone know of the closures that take effect throughout the year. Persons caught behind the boundary lines could be arrested for trespassing and possibly illegally taking fish (poaching). Please pay close attention to the information set in the map below and pay attention to signs on the trail while visiting the Silver Creek area. For further information regarding the Silver Creek Fish Hatchery area please visit our website at: http://www.azgfd.gov/hatcheries/silver_creek.shtml



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