

# Proposed Fishing Regulation Changes for 2015/2016

## 1. Reduce the statewide bag limit for all species of catfish to 10, in the aggregate.

**Proposed Regulation:** Catfish (including channel and flathead); 10 any combination.

**Current Regulation Language:** Catfish (including channel and flathead); 25 any combination.

**Justification:** In 2014, the possession limit for all species of fish in the state was changed to double the bag limit. After this change, the public voiced concern that the current bag limit of 25 catfish (allowing a possession limit of 50 catfish in possession) is too high and may adversely affect catfish populations. Therefore, the Department proposes to amend the statewide catfish regulation to 10 in any combination. By reducing the bag limit to 10, people could still have 20 catfish in possession, which is close to the number of catfish they could have in possession prior to 2014.

Catfish anglers statewide strongly support a reduction in creel from 25 to 10 fish. According to a 2013 angler opinion study, catfish anglers support the proposed reduction to a 10 fish bag limit with 57% supporting the reduction to 25% opposing the reduction (17% had no opinion).

This change could help sustain healthy populations of catfish, statewide. This change would also make the statewide regulation on catfish consistent with the existing regulation on the lower Colorado River adjacent to California. The change will reduce the number of special regulations on catfish essentially simplifying our regulations on catfish in Arizona.

### **Potential Benefits:**

- Proactively sustain healthy populations of catfish following the change in possession limits.
- Simplify regulations between the lower Colorado River and the rest of the state.
- Reflect the desire of catfish anglers for a reduced bag limit statewide.

### **Potential Drawbacks:**

- Decreased opportunity for angler harvest of catfish.

**2. Designate all public waters as Community Fishing Program Waters within the municipal boundaries of the cities of Phoenix, Maricopa, Avondale, Scottsdale, Gilbert, San Tan Valley, Cave Creek, El Mirage, Sun City, Sun City West, Beardsley, Goodyear, Buckeye, Chandler, Youngstown, Peoria, Glendale, Surprise, Payson, Tucson, Sahuarita, Yuma, Somerton, Tempe, Litchfield Park, and Fountain Hills except the portions of the Verde River, Salt River, Gila River and Lake Pleasant within those boundaries.**

### **Designation only**

**Justification:** For the purposes of providing and promoting close and convenient fishing opportunities to residents of communities across Arizona and to more clearly describe the target customer base, the Department proposes the Commission designate all waters within the municipal boundaries of the cities of Phoenix, Maricopa, Avondale, Scottsdale, Gilbert, San Tan Valley, Cave Creek, El Mirage, Sun City, Sun City West, Beardsley, Goodyear, Buckeye, Chandler, Youngstown, Peoria, Glendale, Surprise, Payson, Tucson, Sahuarita, Yuma, Somerton, Tempe, Litchfield Park, and Fountain Hills as Community Fishing Program waters. The continued addition and removal of Community Fishing waters in Arizona has become confusing to our public. It is important the Department provides clear, concise, and consistent direction for what is and more importantly what is not covered under the Community Fishing License Structure. The designation using municipal boundaries provides a specific mapped area that is easy to follow. Basically, if an angler is fishing within any of the above mentioned city boundaries, a Community or Statewide License would be valid. The portions of the Verde River, Salt River, Gila River and Lake Pleasant that are within these boundaries would be excluded and only a statewide license would be valid.

In addition, the inclusiveness of the proposal allows the Community Fishing Program to expand and meet the diverse needs of our public without hassle of adding and removing waters. All existing Community waters would be referred to as “actively managed”. These actively managed Community Fishing Waters are identified through approved Intergovernmental Agreements and stocked at intensive rates. All other public waters within the city boundaries would not be managed until an IGA is approved or unless the Department and/or Commission has specific needs to intensively stock. Current regulations for all waters would not be changed unless approved through the Commission Order 40 process.

### **Potential Benefits:**

- Decrease confusion over where the Community Fishing Program Licenses is valid.
- Reduces the need to add and or remove CFP designations on waters annually.

### **Potential Drawbacks:**

- May create expectations for all waters to be stocked at intensive rates.

### **3. Propose to change regulations at Freestone Park (Gilbert) and Friendship Park (Avondale).**

**Proposed Regulation:** The limit is 2 trout; 2 catfish; 1 bass, 13 inches minimum length; 5 sunfish.

#### **Current Regulation Language:**

Freestone: The limit is 4 trout; 4 catfish; 6 bass; unlimited sunfish

Friendship Park: Closed to fishing

#### **Justification:**

Freestone Park: The Town of Gilbert in conjunction with the Department, are proposing to actively manage for fishing recreation at Freestone Park, a 4 acres water. The addition of Freestone Park as an actively managed Community Fishing Water would mean anglers could use any valid fishing license. The Department is proposing Freestone be managed under the Pond Concept, therefore would receive 5 stocking per year (3 catfish, 2 trout) and a daily bag limit of 2 trout, 2 catfish, 1 bass (13-inch minimum), 5 sunfish, and 1 white amur (30 inch minimum). This addition will be the 4<sup>th</sup> water managed in a partnership with the Town of Gilbert.

Friendship Park: Friendship Park is a 1-acre pond in Avondale. The Department and the City of Avondale are proposing to designate Friendship Park as a new actively managed Community Fishing Water. Currently, the park regulations prohibit fishing and no catch-keep angling opportunities exist nearby. The water would be managed under the Pond Concept, therefore would receive 5 stocking per year (3 catfish, 2 trout) and a daily bag limits would be changed to 2 trout, 2 catfish, 1 bass (13-inch minimum), 5 sunfish, and 1 white amur (30 inch minimum). This would mark a new partnership with the City of Avondale, and a new opportunity for people living along the I-10 corridor in the western metro area.

Actively managing these Community Fishing Waters will the Department to regularly stock and provide convenient location for fishing opportunity and harvest of fish.

#### **Potential Benefits:**

- Serve more customers in more places
- Provide more opportunities to recruit youth and new customers
- Develop new partnerships

#### **Potential Drawbacks:**

- Additional costing required to stock at intensive rates

#### **4. Change Water Ranch Lake to a single barbless hook requirement and place catch and release regulations on bass and sunfish.**

**Proposed Regulation:** The limit is 2 trout; 2 catfish any combination; catch-and-release only for bass and sunfish. 1 white amur, 30 inch minimum length. Single barbless hooks only.

**Current Regulation:** The limit is 4 trout, 4 catfish, 2 bass (13-inch minimum), 10 sunfish, and 1 white amur (30-inch minimum).

**Justification:** The Department proposes to amend the regulation on Gilbert Water Ranch to single barbless hook requirement only, catch-and-release for all bass and sunfish, and reduce the daily bag limit to 2 catfish and 2 trout. Water Ranch is a 5-acre lake within a Riparian Preserve that has been a part of the Community Fishing Program since 1999. The Town of Gilbert prefers to maintain the entire property as a preserve to promote a conservation theme. Gilbert water ranch is the only Community Fishing Water that is identified as an Important Birding Area. The reduction in bait fishing should reduce the amount of discarded fishing lines and hooks. This reduction in line and hooks should reduce the chance of entangling and injuring wildlife/waterfowl.

The current daily bag limit at Water Ranch is 4 catfish, 4 trout, 2 bass (13 inches or more), 10 sunfish, and 1 white amur (30 inches or more). Under the proposed changes, Water Ranch will change from receiving 20 stockings per year to 10 stockings per year. Due to tight budgets, this change is necessary to allow the City of Gilbert to expand catfish and trout stocking to other waters in Gilbert allowing more citizens to participate in the Community Fishing Program.

Catch and release fishing has potential to grow larger fish. It is likely that this lake will produce larger bass, bluegill and catfish than when harvest was allowed. There is also potential to sustain high angler catch rates as fish are not harvested and stay in the lake to be caught multiple times.

#### **Potential Benefits:**

- Reduction in injuries and mortality to waterfowl and wildlife
- Potential to grow larger size bass, and sunfish since harvest will be prohibited
- Potential to create higher catch rates through most of the year, since harvest for bass and sunfish will be restricted
- Reduced cost of stocking fish and sustained angler catch rates at low costs

#### **Potential Drawbacks:**

- Reduction in opportunity to harvest fish at this location
- Significant reduction in fishing stocking. This will cause a shift in type of anglers using the lake. This may or may not reduce angler participation in the long term.

**5. Propose to change regulations for Horton Creek, and Grant Creek to single barbless hook, artificial fly and lure only and catch and release only for trout.**

**Proposed Regulation:** Catch and release only for trout. Trout must be immediately released unharmed; no trout may be kept. Single barbless hook, artificial fly and lure only and catch and release.

**Current Regulation(s):**

Horton Creek: 6 trout any combination;

Grant Creek: 6 trout any combination;

**Justification:**

Grant Creek

Grant Creek located in the Pinaleño Mountains northeast of Wilcox is a fishery that is unique in southeast Arizona in that it is one of only a few streams that supports a fishable wild population of reproducing trout. Historically Grant Creek was stocked with several different species of trout until the 1960's when it was identified as historic range for Apache trout. A renovation was completed and efforts to establish Apache trout were started, however it was later determined that Grant Creek was actually outside of historic range and efforts to maintain and enhance Apache trout in this location were abandoned. Although this effort was halted the Apache trout that were stocked were left in the creek and they have survived successfully and now provide a unique angling opportunity. This location is a favorite of local fly fisherman and does get regular visitation. Recently anglers begin reporting a reduction in the number of fish caught in the last year to year and a half in those sections of the creek easily accessible from the old road. Anglers are concerned that the easily accessed areas are experiencing heavier fishing pressure resulting in the reduction in the numbers of large adult fish.

In an effort to sustain this truly unique fishery with minimal management effort the Region is proposing changes in the allowable methods to single barbless hook, artificial fly and lure only to reduce hooking injuries and mortality and the implementation of a restriction on harvest from 6 trout per day to catch and release only to reduce the harvest of adult trout increasing their opportunity of successful reproduction leading to the persistence of this unique opportunity.

Horton Creek

Horton Creek has a high density population of naturally reproducing brown trout for much of its length. Wild brown trout are an important resource and high density populations of wild brown trout are rare. The region no longer stocks brown trout but does manage for them on certain streams, such as Horton Creek. Instituting a catch-and-release regulation on Horton Creek would protect this important wild trout fishery and highlight the Department's efforts to protect these resources.

The regulation change would help protect the fishery from overharvest and from stochastic events like wildfire and drought. In addition, the regulation would highlight the Department's effort to acknowledge and protect important fisheries resources. It could also lead to increased angler use. Increased angler use would benefit the local community and the Department.

**Potential Benefits:**

- Regulation changes protect both creeks from over harvest and hooking mortality.
- Preserves unique trout fishing waters in the state.
- Creates waters that can be added to a Blue Ribbon marketing campaign.

**Potential Drawbacks:**

- Would require lure anglers at Grant Creek to change treble hooks to single hooks and bait anglers to change methods completely by eliminating the use of live and artificially prepared bait.
- Might give the appearance that angling opportunity is being further restricted. However, there are numerous locations in close proximity to Wilcox that anglers wishing to catch their limit of trout can visit to do so, so it is expected that these changes will have very little impact on anglers in the area.
- Increased angler use could potentially lead to some habitat degradation. Also the proposal could alienate a portion of the angling public by restricting certain activities.

## **6. Propose to change regulations on Chevelon Creek above and below Chevelon Lake to artificial fly and lure only with reduced daily bag limits.**

**Proposed Regulation Change:** Chevelon Creek from Chevelon Lake to the confluence with Willow Springs and from Chevelon Creek down to the Chevelon Crossing. The limit is 2 trout; artificial fly and lure only.

**Current Regulation:** The limit is 6 trout.

**Justification:** There are very few streams on top of the rim that provide trout fishing. The stream above Chevelon Canyon Lake to the confluence with Willow Springs has a resident population of wild trout. The creek below Chevelon Canyon Lake flows in the spring and creates a good seasonal trout fishery. However, there is potential to augment flow in the stream during the summer to provide a year round trout fishery below the lake.

Restricting take in these streams will provide higher catch rates than the general regulations. There is little data on streams with special regulations in Region 1. However, lakes in Region 1 have substantially higher summer catch rates with special regulations (1.7 fish/hour) versus lakes with general fishing (0.32 fish/hour). Therefore, we expect special regulations in the stream will keep catch rates high.

Currently, there are different regulation for the stream and the lake. The current daily bag limit for trout for Chevelon Canyon Lake is 2 with a artificial fly and lure only restriction. This regulation supports consistent fishing throughout the year. Making regulations consistent among the lake and the creek will reduce confusion among the angler and make laws easier to enforce.

### **Potential Benefits:**

- Improve catch rates in streams above and below Chevelon Lake. Improve a stream fishery on top of the rim where there are few other stream opportunities
- Create consistency among regulations between the Lake and the Creek.
- Creates waters that can be added to a Blue Ribbon marketing campaign

### **Potential Drawbacks:**

- Reduce opportunity for harvest and eliminate the opportunity to use bait in the Creeks above and below Chevelon Canyon Lake.
- May retain more trout near a roundtail chub population. Roundtail chub are a sensitive native species, by limiting trout harvest below the lake there is potential for more trout and chub interactions. This interaction will be limited by allowing general fishing and regular harvest of trout from the power line down (roundtail densities are highest at the power line and downstream).

## **7. Modify regulations for trout, catfish and bass within the Williams Area Lakes, Kaibab, Cataract, Dogtown, City, and Santa Fe Reservoirs.**

**Proposed Regulation:** The limit is 6 trout; 4 catfish; 2 bass, 13 inch minimum length.

### **Current Regulation:**

Cataract Lake: The limit is 4 trout; 4 catfish; 2 bass, 13 inch minimum length

City Reservoir: The limit is 4 trout; 4 catfish; 2 bass, 13 inch minimum length

Dogtown Lake: The limit is 6 trout; 25 catfish; 6 bass

Kaibab Lake: The limit is 4 trout; 4 catfish; 2 bass, 13 inch minimum length

Santa Fe Reservoir: The limit is 6 trout; 4 catfish; 6 bass; unlimited sunfish

**Justification:** Some Williams Area Lakes regulations were changed in 2012 to mirror the Community Fishing Program model. This model is effective at waters with high use patterns and high catch rates. The limits preserve more fish in the water longer to satisfy more customers. Since that time, the regional office and the wildlife manager have received numerous verbal complaints about the reduced trout limit. Since 2012, data collected indicates that angler use and harvest does not fit the Community Fishing model. Stocked catchable rainbow trout in waters such as Cataract Lake and Kaibab Lake are harvested by aquatic birds, Eagles, Osprey's and many do not survive long-term to justify reduced limits to anglers. Therefore, no biological reason exists for a reduced trout limit. The reduced catfish limit remains viable due to low stocking rates and potentially high harvest close to stocking dates.

In addition, the Regional Fisheries Program is planning to develop Dogtown Lake as a mixed cold water/warm water fishery similar to Cataract Lake and Kaibab Lake. Currently the lake supports an illegally introduced black crappie population along with stocked rainbow trout and stocked brown trout. Black crappie compete with stocked and the few holdover trout for food, mainly in the form of insects. Black crappie populations in lakes without an adequate forage base for year 2 + cohorts tend to stunt and fail to provide quality sizes for anglers. All the Williams area lakes lack an adequate forage base to support quality black crappie fisheries. The Department plans to stock largemouth bass and channel catfish into Dogtown Lake to increase the angler opportunity for the lake and to help control the black crappie population. In cooperation with the Kaibab National Forest, Trout Unlimited, and Northern Arizona Flycasters, the Department is also planning the placement fish habitat in the lake to improve the conditions for warm water species.

The changes in regulations will increase harvest opportunity of stocked trout and reduce competition between warm water sunfishes like crappie and sunfish to increase growth of holdover trout. Changes will also protect the recently stocked largemouth bass and allow a viable population to be established in the lakes.

### **Potential Benefits:**

- Create consistency among trout limits among all major lakes in the Williams area.

- Increase customer satisfaction in providing more harvest.

**Potential Drawbacks:**

- None

## **8. Reduce bag limit on sunfish and crappie in the lower Colorado River, including Lake Havasu and Mittry Lake.**

**Proposed Regulation Change:** 25 sunfish or crappie any combination.

**Current Regulation:** Unlimited

**Justification:** In an effort to simplify regulations, the proposed change on sunfish and crappie bag limits on the Colorado River to 25 in any combination will be consistent with California's regulations. This change could help sustain healthy populations of sunfish. California and Arizona have different bag limits on sunfish and crappie in the lower Colorado River.

Fishing for redear sunfish has become popular due to the recent world records being caught there. The fishing for redear sunfish is being called some of the best in the nation identified in numerous popular fishing magazines. The redear population in Lake Havasu has created a destination fishery for redear sunfish. In response to the popularity, the Department has received numerous requests from anglers to reduce the bag limit on sunfish at Lake Havasu. Anglers United, a constituent group with a very organized local Lake Havasu Chapter, has voiced their full support for this change.

The location of the proposed regulations will be from the Colorado River at the I-40 bridge south to the International Boundary with Mexico and include Lake Havasu, Martinez Lake, Mittry Lake and associated backwaters.

### **Potential Benefits:**

- Reduce public confusion regarding regulations on the Colorado River.
- Create consistency between California and Arizona fishing regulations on the Colorado River.
- Reduce unintentional violations of the law.

### **Potential Drawbacks:**

- Decreased opportunity for angler harvest of sunfish.

## **9. Propose to place catch and release regulations for largemouth bass on Dankworth Pond and Pena Blanca Lake with a sunset on December 31, 2016.**

**Proposed Regulation Change:** Catch-and-release only for largemouth bass. Bass must be immediately release unharmed through December 31, 2016.

### **Current Regulation:**

Dankworth Pond: 6 largemouth bass in bag, 12 largemouth bass in possession.

Pena Blanca Lake: Catch-and-release only for largemouth bass. Bass must be immediately release unharmed through December 31, 2014.

### **Justification:**

Dankworth Pond: The Arizona Game and Fish Department and Arizona State Parks recently completed a vegetation removal project at this lake that required for the complete draining of the lake. This also resulted in the total elimination of the existing fish population. The small pond is now full again and anglers have returned. The Department has already stocked bluegill and redear sunfish and channel catfish and is now ready to begin the reestablishment of the largemouth bass population. Experience has shown that sunfish populations will respond quickly in the lake and should re-establish themselves without any need for harvest restrictions. However largemouth bass populations typically are much slower to respond and are typically more aggressively targeted and harvested by anglers. This increased pressure can lead to over-harvest and greatly hamper the Department's efforts to restore the fish population to a self sustaining population. By instituting a harvest regulation anglers will be required to release all largemouth bass allowing these fish to continue to contribute to the re-establishment of the population.

Pena Blanca: Initially the Department had closed Pena Blanca Lake to the harvest of largemouth bass until December 31, 2014. This closure was instituted to protect fish stocked in an effort to rebuild the population following the U.S. Forest Service Project to dredge the lake and remove mercury contaminated sediments. Because of circumstances beyond the control of the Department the lake has yet to be restocked with largemouth bass therefore there is still a need to protect the largemouth bass population as the department works to re-establish it at the lake. Recent surveys show that the bass population appears to be established however the population is still comprised of mostly small fish. Although established bass in the population still need more time to grow into the larger size classes and it is imperative that we continue to protect the few existing larger fish needed for continued reproductive success from harvest.

### **Potential Benefits:**

- Speed the establishment of the bass population by preventing the anglers from removing reproductive individuals from the population.
- Reduce the cost and Department resources needed to augment the bass population.

### **Potential Drawbacks:**

- Those anglers with an expectation of catching their limit of largemouth bass may feel that the value of the license is decreased as they are receiving fewer products to harvest.

**10. Open Frye Creek and Upper East Fork Little Colorado River, upstream of Colter Dam to native trout angling under catch and release, single barbless hook, artificial fly and lure regulations.**

**Proposed Regulation Change:**

Frye Creek: Catch and release only for trout. Trout must be immediately released unharmed; no trout may be kept. Single barbless hook, artificial fly and lure only and catch and release. The stream would be open to angling between October 1 and March 31 annually.

Upper East Fork Little Colorado River: Catch and release only for trout. Trout must be immediately released unharmed; no trout may be kept. Single barbless hook, artificial fly and lure only and catch and release.

**Current Regulation Language:** Closed to fishing.

**Justification:**

Frye Creek:

Frye Creek located in the Pinaleno Mountains southwest of Safford is currently one of three Gila trout recovery streams in Arizona. The stream was determined to be fishless in 2008 following the Nuttall Fire in 2004. Gila trout were first stocked in the stream in 2009, with 500 fish (South Diamond lineage) stocked in November 2009. Subsequent stockings occurred in 2011, with 500 and 100 fish stocked in February and November respectively. Successful reproduction has been observed in the stream on a yearly basis in 2012 and 2013. Habitat conditions are sufficient to support a reproducing population, with several size classes observed during surveys in 2013 and 2014. Continued monitoring will be conducted in Frye Creek to ensure that angling is not adversely impacting the population.

In an effort to provide anglers a unique opportunity to fish for Gila trout, the Region is proposing changes in the regulation to single barbless hook, artificial fly and lure only with a harvest restriction of catch and release from the current regulation of closed to fishing.

Upper East Fork Little Colorado River

The upper East Fork Little Colorado River, upstream of Colter Dam in Apache County, was closed to fishing in 2006 to establish a recovery population of threatened Apache trout. The stream is located within the historic range of Apache trout and was identified as a candidate stream for recovery. The upper reaches were renovated in 2004-2005 to remove non-native brook trout, and pure Apache trout were initially restocked in 2006-2007. The stream has been closed to fishing since 2006 to allow the reintroduced Apache trout to establish to a level that could support angling.

Population criteria was established that would define when an Apache trout recovery stream would be opened to angling, consisted of the following:

- Distribution of trout throughout the treated and previously occupied reaches;
- Minimum of 3 years of recruitment in the recovery stream;
- Population size of at least 500 adults or at the maximum potential for the stream.

An early population estimate was conducted in 2009, but found only 318 total Apache trout in the stream, of which only 107 were adults. This population size was much lower than the criteria allowed and much lower than the stream's potential, so the stream was kept closed.

The latest population estimate was conducted in late summer of 2013, showing a population size of 1,306 total Apache trout, of which 526 were adult fish. The fish ranged in size from 39 mm to 217 mm total length (1.6-8.7 inches), which is similar to the population characteristics of the nonnative brook trout that occupied the same habitat prior to this project. Surveys of the East Fork LCR found the population of brook trout ranging in size from 29 mm to 210 mm total length (1.2-8.4 inches). Multiple age classes of Apache trout were documented in the 2013 survey.

This population size, in addition to documenting at least 3 years of recruitment and distribution throughout the suitable habitat, meets the population criteria that could support angling for Apache trout recovery streams. Because the population is still relatively small, special regulations should be established that will not cause the population to drop below the criteria listed above. This regulation should consist of catch-and-release angling only, artificial fly and lure only, and single barbless hook only.

The lower East Fork LCR, below Colter Dam, has remained open to angling under statewide regulations and no change is recommended for this portion of the stream.

**Potential Benefits:**

- Opening Frye Creek to angling would provide the first opportunity for anglers to fish for a naturally reproducing population of Gila trout in Arizona. This would benefit future recovery actions for the species as an example of a successful project which created a new fishing opportunity in a stream which had previously been fishless.
- Restriction to catch and release, single barbless hook, artificial fly and lure would reduce hooking mortality on Gila trout in Frye Creek.
- Regulations would be consistent with other catch and release trout fisheries throughout the state, thus reducing confusion amongst anglers.
- Will provide a destination type fishery, which may increase the economic impact in local communities as it would be the only stream in the state open to Gila trout fishing.
- Re-opening the waters to fishing shows that we can and will follow through with those commitments made years ago.
- A harvest restriction will allow the population to maintain itself without the need for regular stockings thus eliminating the costs associated with maintaining the fishery.

**Potential Drawbacks:**

- May require additional law enforcement presence at the opening of the fishery to ensure that regulations are being followed.

## **11. Allow goldfish to be used as live bait when collected and used onsite only in specific waters.**

**Proposed Regulation:** Goldfish allowed onsite as live bait in Community Fishing Program waters; the Salt River downstream of Roosevelt dam including Apache, Canyon, and Saguaro lakes; the Salt River downstream of Saguaro Lake Dam; mainstem Colorado River from Lake Mead downstream to the Southern International Boundary with Mexico including impounded reservoirs; Lake Pleasant; mainstem of the Verde River downstream of Horseshoe Dam; and Alamo Lake.

**Current Regulation:** Goldfish are permitted on all waters of the counties of La Paz and Yuma. No waters of any other countries are open except: 1) Lake Mead and, 2) the Colorado River downstream of Hoover Dam to the Southern International Boundary with Mexico, including impounded reservoirs, and 3) Alamo Lake.

**Justification:** Although goldfish are widely available in the pet trade and aquaculture, they are also used as live bait and are a mid-level risk species. Goldfish namely persist in lacustrine systems and do not have a measurable impact on native aquatic species or sport fish, although they may be carriers for parasites and pathogens. Opportunity for use as live baitfish for goldfish is not known; however, since goldfish are a mid-level risk species and seldom persist in small riverine systems the opportunity for use as a more commonly available, sold, and transported live-bait species is tenable. Therefore, regulations could be altered to allow greater opportunity for onsite goldfish use as a live baitfish, while limiting transport.

### **Potential Benefits:**

- Gold fish are readily available in Community Fishing waters and in the Verde River Drainage from Horseshoe downstream.
- Provide great catfish bait for anglers.
- Are considered only a mid level risk to aquatic ecosystems in Arizona.

### **Potential Drawbacks:**

- May create new occupied areas as live bait use may lead to illegal introductions in Arizona.

# Commission Briefing Only

## 12. Remove snagging season language for Alamo Lake and Lake Havasu.

**Recommendation:** Snagging season on Lake Havasu and Alamo Lake is not valid

**Current Regulation:**

**Alamo Lake:** Snagging of carp and tilapia is restricted from March 1<sup>st</sup> through November 30<sup>th</sup>.

**Lake Havasu:** Snagging of carp, tilapia, and shad is restricted from April 1<sup>st</sup> through November 30<sup>th</sup>.

**Justification:** A general season statewide is allowed for taking carp, buffalofish, mullet, tilapia, goldfish and shad by bow and arrow, crossbow, snare, gig, spear, speargun, or snagging (313) unless further restricted by Commission Order for snagging or spear and speargun (317a and b). In 1993, the Commission adopted a recommendation for the change to Commission Order 40 in an attempt to further restrict methods of take including snagging carp, tilapia and shad at Lake Havasu and Alamo Lake. The recommendation read: “In addition to angling, snagging is the only method of take allowed for tilapia, carp and shad from January 1 through March 31 and October 1 through December 31.

Because the Commission opened a season on Lake Havasu, once the seasons close on the specific restrictions, the statewide regulations apply to that water, essentially never really restricting methods as intended. A change to R12-4-313 in 2004 resulted in making snagging a legal method of take statewide, all year long. As a result the tilapia, carp and shad snagging season is open January 1 through March 31 and October 1 through December 31 and reverts back to the general season once the specific season closes.

Our interpretation obviously doesn't follow the intent of the change at the time and therefore the reason Fisheries is revisiting this restriction is to remove confusion and provide consistency in snagging seasons. The seasonal snagging language will be removed from Fishing Regulation Booklets and anglers will continue to be allowed to snag carp, buffalofish, mullet, tilapia, goldfish and shad as per R12-4-313 at Lake Havasu and Alamo Lake.

**Potential Benefits:**

- Confusion over snagging seasons will be limited
- Law enforcement will be simplified
- Angler opportunity will be enhanced
- Regulation simplification statewide

**Potential Drawbacks:**

- Anglers may inadvertently snag non-target fish species