

Endangered Species Act 40th Anniversary Success Story Loach Minnow

The Blue River is a unique stream on the Forest that has the majority of its native population, including the endangered loach minnow. It was identified in 2008 by Bureau of Reclamation for a fish barrier to protect the existing native fish assemblage. The Blue River was also identified as an eligible Wild and Scenic River.

In 2004, with help and support from Amy Unthank, Region 3 Fish Program Manager at the time, the Forest Service undertook a Suitability Study for the Blue River while the Bureau of Reclamation began an environmental analysis for the fish barrier, mechanical non-native removal and native fish reintroduction. With both analyses happening concurrently, planning and coordination between agencies was continuous. Multiple public meetings throughout the course of the planning efforts occurred. Decisions for both projects were signed in fall 2010 and the Forest issued BOR a Special Use Permit for barrier construction and maintenance.



Figure 2. Completed Blue River fish barrier. Photo courtesy of Rob Clarkson, Bureau of Reclamation.

Construction of the barrier took 7 months. All crews, equipment and construction material was flown into the barrier location with helicopters and sky cranes. Construction of the 245 feet long barrier was completed in July 2012. Shortly thereafter, augmentation of the remnant loach minnow population occurred along with repatriation of two other native species: endangered spikedace and the candidate species roundtail chub by Arizona Game and Fish Department. Fall 2012 surveys found all three species in the Blue River which will be closely monitored in coming years. These projects, completed in partnership with state and federal agencies, marked an impressive recovery effort for federally listed and forest sensitive fish species.



Figure 1. Endangered loach minnow. Photo courtesy of Tyler Pilger, University of New Mexico.



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