

**Fossil Creek Participatory Meeting
Northern Arizona University
&
Conservation Groups and Tribes
April 14, 2005**

Attendees:

Paul Marsh, Arizona State University
Jerry Stefferud, fishery biologist, retired, Tonto National Forest
Sally Stefferud, fishery biologist, retired, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Mindy Schmilgen-Wilson, formerly with American Rivers and TNC
Vincent Randall, Yavapai Apache Tribe
Tim Flood, Friends of Arizona Rivers/Arizona Riparian Council
Anita MacFarlane, Northern Arizona Audubon
Don Steuter, Sierra Club
Corey Hilton, recent graduate of NAU
William Auberle, Interim Director, Engineering, NAU
Charlie Schlinger, engineer, NAU
Jane Marks, aquatic biologist, NAU
Michele James, Fossil Creek Coordinator, NAU
Matt Jedra, graduate student, NAU

- I. Welcome and Introductions: William Auberle provided background of the research NAU has been conducting at Fossil Creek through a grant from the Nina Mason Pulliam Trust. NAU is just completing the first year of research and monitoring under this grant and has just received funding for a second year. Research to date has focused on determining the baseline conditions prior to return of full flows.
- II. Overview of Fossil Creek Research and Monitoring: Charlie Schlinger presented a PowerPoint slide show that provided a summary of on-going research and monitoring at Fossil Creek by NAU and others.
- III. Overview of Aquatic Research: Jane Marks presented a detailed PowerPoint slide show on her past and on-going aquatic research.
- IV. Questions and discussion by group of slide presentations:

Sally Stefferud pointed out that fishery biologists are not ignoring the crayfish problem as she heard implied in Jane Mark's presentation. Jane Mark's agreed.

Anita MacFarlane asked if there was any bird monitoring taking place? Michele James answered that Matt Johnson with USGS was monitoring for yellow-billed cuckoo and black hawk this year in the 4.5 mile reach from Irving to the diversion

dam per a contract with APS as part of the decommissioning work. No other bird monitoring is taking place this year.

Jerry Stefferud asked if there were any plans to track riparian vegetation changes that may occur as travertine development increases? His concern is that there may be loss of some of the big trees over time and there may be a lag time when there are only small trees present, before large trees develop again. Jane Marks indicated that Mike Keasley was brought in recently to the project and he will start monitoring the vegetation.

Jerry Stefferud asked if there was any Forest Service monitoring taking place in the botanical area? Matt Jedra answered that he had heard that they had just found yellow star thistle in the botanical area and that Barb Phillips and Debbie Crisp with the Coconino NF have done some survey work there in the past.

Tim Flood asked if there were any photo points in place? Charlie Schlinger indicated that NAU only has aerial photos thus far and that no photo points have instituted yet. Tim Flood indicated that he has photo points from above Irving for the past three or four years. Jane Marks indicated that the high school students have a lot of photo points and that other individuals may have some as well. Tim Flood indicated that he will help track these photos down.

Don Steuter asked when the top 14 feet of the diversion dam is coming down.
Answer: 2007.

Sally Stefferud made the point that the native fish restoration work would not have occurred on its own but was a part of the mitigation for BR's activities. It is not a "given" that this type of work would occur during a dam removal project.

Paul Marsh stated that the only viable way to recover fish is the removal of non-native fish. BR has made a major investment in something very positive for native fish.

- V. Research and Monitoring: Charlie Schlinger gave a brief overview of the Research and Monitoring Narrative and Matrix that NAU prepared. The document is a work in progress and represents the research and monitoring that is on-going or planned at Fossil Creek by NAU as well as other parties.

Vincent Randall indicated that the Tonto Apache Tribe is conducting some ethnobotanical work in Fossil Creek right now; he is the contact for this work.

Vincent Randall indicated that Fossil Creek is one of the most religiously significant areas for the Apaches. It is a religious sanctuary for plants, animals and water. He's glad to know that water will flow again on June 4. Vincent indicated that there are many ceremonial items in Fossil Creek. He believes there should be limited access in some areas because of the presence of these items.

Some of the items have been taken and the tribes are trying to have them returned. The tribe's concern is that the public will remove ceremonial items that are present; they do not want these items desecrated. The Yavapai-Apache Nation has been in close communication with APS and the tribal archeologist is monitoring the decommissioning project. Vincent believes that this piece of country should be what it should be; humans cannot make it the way they want it to be, we can only be stewards.

VI. Stewardship of Fossil Creek: Bill Auberle introduced the subject of the need for sustained stewardship of Fossil Creek. With the projected increase in recreational use of the area and the departure of APS in 2009, is there a need for a Friends of Fossil Creek group?

What would this group like to see a Friends group do? Monitoring, clean-up, gather and manage photo images, lobby the Forest Service for dedicated funding to complete the management plan?

Matt Jedra indicated that in his survey work at Fossil Creek, 40 people have indicated that they are interested in joining a Friends group. Michele James indicated that a number of people who attended NAU outreach meetings in October also expressed interest (she has their names and contact info).

Anita MacFarlane indicated that designation of Fossil Creek as an Important Bird Area (IBA) could help bring in funding. Anita MacFarlane also indicated that Audubon and TNC may be able to help with a Friends group; she will bring this up a special Audubon business meeting taking place in September.

Mindy Schmilgen-Wilson stated that she sees two distinct functions for a Friends group: 1) stewardship; 2) lobbying the Forest Service (this work can't be done as part of a 5013c).

Tom Flood indicated that he is concerned about what will happen when the physical presence of APS is no longer present in the area. What if Fossil Creek turns into another Childs? He had hoped that NAU would be a presence in the area. Bill Auberle indicated that NAU had looked into this in the past, but were unable to secure funding to allow for a long-term presence in the area.

Mindy Schmilgen-Wilson said that they looked at all of this in the late 1990's. All of their concerns are still there because the Forest Service has not completed their management plan. There are 17 acres of private land out there. There may be an opportunity to purchase that land, but perhaps we could also bring in a steward (NAU, Audubon, TNC)?

Charlie Schlinger said that there is an interest in a field station at Fossil Creek (managed by multiple academic institutions).

Jerry Stefferud said that the Forest Service may not be open to this due to problems they have encountered with such stations in the past.

Charlie Schlinger said that it may be more possible to complete the field station if the water university comes together.

Sally Stefferud suggested that we look into Arivaipa Creek; the area has similar recreational use concerns. There, it is about more than just cleaning up trash; rescuing people is a large concern.

APS responds to 100 medical calls each year at Fossil Creek.

Matt Jedra indicated that we may be able to approach the Friends of the Forest group in Sedona to see if they would be interested in forming a Friends of Fossil Creek group.

Sally Stefferud asked if there was a possibility that the conservation partners will stay together to lobby the Forest Service for increased funding dedicated to management?

Tim Flood said that the partners didn't really think past the restoration of full flows.

Mindy Schmilgen-Wilson said that the objective of the partners work was the return of full flows.

Tim Flood said that perhaps now it's time for another group to be formed (Friends of Fossil Creek)?

Sally Stefferud said that she sees the need for three groups: 1) lobbying/political group; 2) organizing volunteers to pick up trash, etc.; and, 3) an entity that can accept private donations and use them to benefit the area.

Tim Flood said that the Friends of Agua Fria National Monument was just formed to provide input to the BLM. The prime mission of this group is to protect the area (it is a protection organization). ASU has a program that helps non-profits form and they helped this group through the process of becoming a non-profit organization.

Handouts from the meeting:

- Agenda
- Research and Monitoring Inventory (March 15, 2005)
- Pulliam grant proposals from NAU, year one and year two (goals and strategies)