

## **Categorical Exclusion Documentation Format for Actions Other Than Hazardous Fuels and Fire Rehabilitation Actions**

Project Fish Depredation Project in the Agua Fria River and Tributaries  
DOI-BLM-AZ-P030-2010-0004-CX

### **A. Background**

BLM Office: *Phoenix District Office (PDO)*

Lease/Serial/Case File No.: N/A

Proposed Action Title/Type: Fish Depredation Project In Agua Fria River and Tributaries

Location of Proposed Action: Agua Fria River and Tributaries: T9N, R2E, T9N, R3E, T91/2N, R2E, T10N, R2E, T10N, R3E, T11N, R3E. Gila and Salt River Meridian

Description of Proposed Action: This proposed action involves the removal of depredating non-native fish and crustaceans within the Agua Fria River and tributaries in compliance with Arizona Game and Fish regulations. Non-native fish and crustacean populations are established and spreading within the Agua Fria River basin. These non-native species prey upon native fishes, reptiles and amphibians and are considered a major threat (AGFD Crayfish Brochure 2003, AGFD Animal Abstract accessed 8/10). Non-native species include: Green Sunfish (*Lepomis cyanellus*), Bullhead Catfish (*Ameiurus melas*) and Crayfish (*Orconectes virilis*). In an effort to enhance the ecosystem of native species, areas containing invasive species will be seined and any non-native species will be removed relocated. Seining efforts will focus on areas with noted invasive species presence where probability for capture is highest. Additionally, traps will be used to catch crayfish. Any native species will be immediately placed back into the water. Equipment will be sanitized after each use to reduce the spread of pathogens and invasive species. The Badger Springs Trailhead and Silver Creek area will serve as staging areas for groups participating up to 20. Other areas may also be used for small groups. Tread Lightly! and Leave No Trace principles will be practiced.

### **B. Land Use Plan Conformance**

Land Use Plan (LUP) Name: Agua Fria National Monument Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan

Date Approved/Amended: **4/22/2010**

The proposed action is in conformance with the applicable LUP because it is specifically provided for in the following LUP decision(s):

WF-2 page 15: The distribution and abundance of invasive animals will be contained, and through active management, the impact of invasive species on native ecosystems will be reduced from current levels.

WF-21 page 17: Adverse impacts to native animal communities from invasive species will be

reduced. Efforts to control or eradicate invasive wildlife species will be carried out in cooperation and collaboration with AGFD or other organizations.

WF-1 page 15: Maintain, restore, or enhance the diversity, distribution, and viability of populations of native wildlife, and maintain, restore, or enhance overall ecosystem health. Discretionary activities will be managed to ensure connectivity of habitats and maintenance of unrestricted wildlife movement.

The proposed action is in conformance with the LUP, even though it is not specifically provided for, because it is clearly consistent with the following LUP decision(s) (objectives, terms, and conditions):

TE-4 page 11: All biologically suitable perennial waters on public lands are occupied by thriving populations of Gila topminnow, Gila chub, and desert pupfish.

TE-23 page 15: Conservation of Federal threatened or endangered, proposed, candidate, and other special status species is promoted by maintaining or restoring their habitats.

**C: Compliance with NEPA:**

The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with 516 DM 2, Appendix 1, or 516 DM 11.5: **Appendix 4, BLM Categorical Exclusions: A. Fish and Wildlife; 6. Relocation of nuisance or depredating wildlife, providing the relocation does not introduce new species into the ecosystem.**

This categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment. The proposed action has been reviewed, and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 516 DM 2 or 516 DM 11.5 apply.

I considered: I have considered the impact of seining and trapping on native fish, amphibians and reptiles. Though temporarily intrusive, techniques employed will minimize negative impacts to native fishes. Other methods such as electro-fishing and poison would have a much larger impact on native species. Pathological concerns have also been considered. Equipment will be sanitized between uses at different locations. Additionally, archeological concerns have also been considered. Seining and trapping activities will be limited to areas typically lacking artifacts (i.e. pools of perennial water).

**D: Signature**

Authorizing Official: Signed by Amanda James Date: 01/13/2011

**Amanda James**  
**Acting Agua Fria National Monument Manager**

**Contact Person: Paul Sitzmann**

For additional information concerning this CX review, contact:  
Paul Sitzmann, 21605 North 7th Avenue, Phoenix, Arizona 85027, 623.580.5500

**Note:** A separate decision document must be prepared for the action covered by the CX. See Attachment 2.

BLM Categorical Exclusions: Extraordinary Circumstances<sup>1</sup>

**Attachment 1**

The action has been reviewed to determine if any of the extraordinary circumstances (43 CFR 46.215) apply. The project would:		
1. Have significant impacts on public health or safety		
<b>Yes</b> <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>No</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Rationale:</b> Seining and trapping of non-native fish and crustaceans would not significantly impact public health or safety. Equipment used to trap non-native fish is incapable of impacting public health or safety.
2. Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness or wilderness study areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds (Executive Order 13186); and other ecologically significant or critical areas?		
<b>Yes</b> <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>No</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Rationale:</b> The removal of non-native fish would be beneficial to native fishes; thus, the objects of the Agua Fria National Monument (AFNM) would be protected. Equipment used to trap non-native fish and crustaceans is incapable of physically impacting natural resources if used correctly. However, equipment not properly sanitized may act as a vector to transmit diseases such as chytridiomycosis. Equipment must be sanitized between uses to ensure waterborne diseases are not transmitted.
3. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2)(E)]?		
<b>Yes</b> <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>No</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Rationale:</b> The Fish Depredation Project does not involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources.
4. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks?		
<b>Yes</b> <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>No</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Rationale:</b> Seining and trapping on both native and non-native fish and crustaceans is common practice and its effects are well known to be insignificant.
5. Establish a precedent for future action, or represent a decision in principle about future actions, with potentially significant environmental effects?		
<b>Yes</b> <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>No</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Rationale:</b> Seining and trapping is currently used on the Agua Fria National Monument to monitor native fish populations. This project would be focused in areas with high non-native fish and crustacean populations and is sanctioned by the Arizona Game and Fish

<sup>1</sup> If an action has any of these impacts, you must conduct NEPA analysis.

		Department.
6. Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant, but cumulatively significant, environmental effects?		
Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Rationale:</b> Individual actions that are insignificant environmental impacts are not expected have cumulatively significant environmental effects. Seining and trapping activities would be limited to river channels. No ground disturbances associated with the project will occur. Only non-native fish and crustaceans will be removed.
7. Have significant impacts on properties listed or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the Bureau or office?		
Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Rationale:</b> Although the riparian areas within the Agua Fria National Monument are known to contain a significant amount of cultural resources, seining and trapping of non-native fish and crustaceans will not significantly impact properties listed or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places. No ground disturbance will occur and seining and trapping will occur only in river channels.
8. Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species?		
Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Rationale:</b> The Fish Depredation Project will benefit special status fishes of the Agua Fria River through a reduction in mortality as a result of depredation by non-native species. Some special status fish may be captured unintentionally and must be returned to the water immediately. Seining and trapping is considered to be one of the least invasive methods to capture aquatic species. Additionally, seining and trapping will be limited to areas with high non-native species concentrations to reduce the impact on native species.
9. Violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment?		
Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Rationale:</b> No violation of Federal, State, local, or tribal laws will occur.
10. Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898)?		
Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Rationale:</b> The project areas are located in remote areas within and near AFNM and will not impact low income or minority populations.
11. Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners, or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007)?		
Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Rationale:</b> The Agua Fria National Monument was established to preserve and protect the unique cultural and biological resources found in the area. Prehistoric archaeological sites have been documented to exist along the Agua Fria River and its tributaries. Seining and trapping will not limit access to any sites within the AFNM.

<p>12. Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area, or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112)?</p>		
<p><b>Yes</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><b>No</b></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><b>Rationale:</b> Areas treated by seining and trapping will result in a net reduction in non-native species populations. Equipment will be sanitized to further reduce the spread of non-native species between pools of perennial water. No ground disturbances will occur; thus, no disturbed soil will be made available to noxious weed colonization.</p>

## Approval and Decision

### Attachment 2

**Compliance and assignment of responsibility:** Wildlife

**Monitoring and assignment of responsibility:** Wildlife

**Review:** *We have determined that the proposal is in accordance with the categorical exclusion criteria and that it would not involve any significant environmental effects. Therefore, it is categorically excluded from further environmental review.*

**Prepared by:** Signed by Paul Sitzmann **Date:** \_ 1 / 1 3 / 1 1 \_ \_

**Paul Sitzmann**

Project Lead

**Reviewed by:** Signed by Leah Baker **Date:** \_ 1 / 1 3 / 2 0 1 \_ \_ \_

**Leah Baker**

Planning & Environmental Coordinator

**Reviewed by:** Signed by Amanda James **Date:** 1 / 1 3 / 2 0 1 1 \_ \_

**Amanda James**

Acting Agua Fria National Monument  
Manager

#### **Project Description:**

This proposed action involves the removal of depredating non-native fish and crustaceans within the Agua Fria River and tributaries in compliance with Arizona Game and Fish regulations. Non-native fish and crustacean populations are established and spreading within the Agua Fria River basin. These non-native species prey upon native fishes, reptiles and amphibians and are considered a major threat (AGFD Crayfish Brochure 2003, AGFD Animal Abstract accessed 8/10). Non-native species include: Green Sunfish (*Lepomis cyanellus*), Bullhead Catfish (*Ameiurus melas*) and Crayfish (*Orconectes virilis*). In an effort to enhance the ecosystem of native species, areas containing invasive species will be seined and any non-native species will be removed relocated. Seining efforts will focus on areas with noted invasive species presence where probability for capture is highest. Additionally, traps will be used to catch crayfish. Any native species will be immediately placed back into the water. Equipment will be sanitized after each use to reduce the spread of pathogens and invasive species. The Badger Springs Trailhead and Silver Creek area will serve as staging areas for groups participating up to 20. Other areas may also be used for small groups. Tread Lightly! and Leave No Trace principles will be practiced.

**Decision:** Based on a review of the project described above and field office staff recommendations, I have determined that the project is in conformance with the land use plan and is categorically excluded from further environmental analysis. It is my decision to approve the action as proposed, with the following stipulations (if applicable).

**Stipulations:** A wildlife biologist must be on scene during active seining and trapping activities. All Arizona Game and Fish regulations must be followed by participants.

**Approved By:** Signed by Amanda James      **Date:** 1/13/2011  
Amanda James