

AFC Letterhead

DRAFT

June 4, 2021

Arizona Game and Fish Department
ATTN: Dave Weedman
5000 W. Carefree Highway
Phoenix, AZ 85086

RE: Draft Environmental Assessment Arizona Game and Fish Department & US Fish and Wildlife Service
Sport Fish Stocking Program

Dear Mr. Weedman:

Arizona Flycasters Club (AFC) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments for the draft Sport Fish Stocking Program. AFC is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization that has been dedicated since 1962 to encouraging, supporting, and educating its members and the community in the sport of fly fishing with the techniques of fly fishing, and the ethics of "catch and release" which advance the conservation of fish and their habitats. The organization's activities promote friendship, enjoyment, sportsmanship, and safety and include regular meetings, outings, and fishing trips for our more than two hundred angling family members. We are a Fly Fishers International affiliate club.

Continued Sport Fish Restoration Funding is an essential component of Arizona Game and Fish's stocking and hatchery programs. These programs are directly connected to preserving and protecting Arizona's wild and native fish populations. Arizona has limited water resources and locations for accommodating recreational angling. Natural reproduction cannot sustain the fish population attendant to the fishing pressure without redirection away from wild and native fish to stocked fishing areas. The majority of anglers fish to catch fish either to keep or return to the water for another day. Stocking programs in accessible areas meet these objectives. Absent stocking the only available fish for take or otherwise are reduced to wild and native fish, which would soon be depleted.

The draft EA continues the Conservation and Mitigation Program (CAMP) initiated under the existing Sport Fish Stocking Program. The CAMP is meeting its objectives and considering its ten years of implementation appears to be an appropriate mitigation action in conjunction with continued stocking operations.

In light of the above, AFC supports the draft EA in its present form and encourages its adoption.

Sincerely,

Gene Hechler
President
Arizona Flycasters Club