

Mohave County Fish and Wildlife Service Public Meeting
Remarks by U.S. Congressman Paul A. Gosar, D.D.S.
February 13, 2014

Dr. Gosar sends his warm regards but unfortunately he is on medical leave and having much needed hip surgery today. However, he did ask me to share with you these remarks.

I appreciate you all taking time out of your day to attend this important meeting. I am deeply troubled by the Fish and Wildlife Service's decision to discontinue the Rainbow Trout Stocking Program at Willow Beach.

For over 50 years, the Willow Beach National Fish Hatchery has successfully raised and planted Rainbow Trout in the lower Colorado River.

The arbitrary and misguided decision to discontinue this important program will have significant consequences for local communities along the river as well as sportsmen and anglers throughout the nation.

The Arizona Game and Fish Department has estimated that \$7 1/2- \$12 million flow into the Willow Beach region annually as a result of the economic activity associated with rainbow trout and striped bass anglers. A report done by Arizona State University found that more than a quarter million fisherman visit Arizona each year and spend more than \$800 million on sporting goods and other tourism expenses.

Terminating the annual production of 150,000 rainbow trout at that the Willow Beach Hatchery will stifle Arizona's multi-million dollar fishing industry as well as cause considerable harm to small businesses, local governments and our citizens who depend on the financial benefits associated with sports fishing.

By the Fish and Wildlife Service's own estimates, the National Fish Hatchery System returns \$289 to the economy for every dollar spent. That's an excellent return on our investment and while the USFWS is looking at closing hatcheries throughout the nation, there is plenty of taxpayer dollars being wasted elsewhere in our federal budget that we can reprioritize to fund these important economic engines.

Ironically, the Willow Beach Hatchery will not be closing with the termination of the trout stocking program, even though the sole reason the hatchery was created in the first place was to produce rainbow trout for the sport fishing community.

Rather than raising and planting rainbow trout that drive tourism and yield economic growth, the Fish and Wildlife Service has instructed the hatchery to focus on producing suckers and other fish that don't attract anglers or benefit our economy.

I commend the Mohave County Board of Supervisors for recognizing the danger of this short-sighted decision and continuing to spread awareness.

I continue to monitor this situation closely and Monday had staff from my DC office participate in an important conference call with other AZ, NV and NM state wildlife authorities on the ground to discuss this very topic.

Additionally, we are in the process of crafting a bipartisan, bicameral letter that will be delivered to Interior Secretary Jewell in the near future. Rest assured that this issue is not over and I will continue the fight for jobs, our local economies and most importantly our families who are operating on slim margins and can't afford this costly bureaucratic decision.

May God bless America and the great state of Arizona.

Congressman Paul A. Gosar, D.D.S.
Member of Congress