



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Washington, D.C. 20240



The Honorable Paul Gosar
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

OCT 22 2014

Dear Representative Gosar:

Thank you for your September 4, 2014, letter regarding the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) Willow Beach National Fish Hatchery. Your letter requested clarification regarding the water line failures at the hatchery, whether the Service has identified funding to complete the necessary repairs, and whether we will reinstate the rainbow trout production program at this facility if funding is secured. It also included questions regarding the termination of other propagation programs and on the draft "Strategic Plan for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Fish and Aquatic Conservation Program: FY 2015 - 2019".

We lost large numbers of rainbow trout at the Willow Beach Fish Hatchery and were unable to continue year round production of rainbow trout at this facility because the pipeline, which supplied water to the hatchery, broke and the remaining portion of the pipe is unreliable due to fluctuating water levels and bi-fouling issues in the Colorado River. Fortunately, however, a team of employees from the Service, Arizona Game and Fish Department, Mohave County of Arizona, National Park Service, and Senator John McCain's office have worked together in recent months to develop a proposal to reestablish a sufficient and reliable water supply for the hatchery that we believe would enable us to resume rainbow trout production at this facility.

The recommended alternative is a floating platform mounted pump system designed to provide a minimum of 4,300 gallons per minute (gpm) during seasonal low flows in the Colorado River. The estimated cost, developed by the team, to construct and install this alternative is \$776,448. Because the platform system would be exposed to invasive quagga mussels and other bio-fouling organisms and will require periodic maintenance, annual operation and maintenance costs are estimated at \$15,000 to \$20,000. Although funding to construct and install this proposed project was not included in our deferred maintenance budget, we are working internally to find up to fifty percent of the funding required from existing Service funds and are committed to working with our partners to try and secure the remaining funds from other sources. Once a sufficient and reliable water supply has been fully reestablished, the Service intends to resume rainbow trout production at the Willow Beach National Fish Hatchery

When the *National Fish Hatchery System: Strategic Hatchery and Workforce Planning Report* (Report) was released in November 2013, the Service announced that no hatcheries would be closed in FY 2014, and we have maintained that commitment. In fact, the Service has suspended only four of nearly 300 propagation programs since October 2012, and those were suspended for reasons unrelated to the Report. The Service has not made any recommendations or decisions regarding the status of individual propagation programs for FY 2015. The President has requested \$48.617 million for operation of the National Fish Hatchery System in FY 2015,

approximately \$2 million more than Congress appropriated in FY 2014. We will evaluate the status of our programs once final funding is received.

The draft "Strategic Plan for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Fish and Aquatic Conservation Program: FY2015 -2019" (Plan) was developed internally by senior leaders within the Fish and Aquatic Conservation (FAC) program in the Regions and Headquarters and is based on the vision developed by the Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council. It was widely distributed for comment to all FAC staff, other Service programs, and our partners and stakeholders at the end of August and in early September, well after the July 25th hearing date. We asked our staff as well as our partners and stakeholders to review the draft plan and provide comments by October 6th. We're reviewing those comments now and hope to finalize the Plan later this year.

Thank you for your continued interest in the Willow Beach National Fish Hatchery. We look forward to continued positive dialogues with our partners regarding repairs to the water line. If you have any questions, please contact Mr. David Hoskins, Assistant Director for Fish and Aquatic Conservation, at (202) 208-3517.

Sincerely,



DIRECTOR