



June 9, 2021

Submitted electronically via: fw2fa@fws.gov

Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
P.O. Box 1306, Room 8518
Albuquerque, NM 87103-1306

Re: Draft Environmental Assessment for the Arizona Game and Fish Department Sport Fish Stocking Program

Arizona Sportsmen for Wildlife Conservation (AZSFWC) is a 501c-3 non-profit organization dedicated to wildlife conservation, habitat work, youth recruitment and retention, as well as educating outdoor enthusiasts on issues important to their passions. We have 40 member, affiliate and associate groups that reach across the spectrum of wildlife conservation, hunting, angling, shooting, outdoor recreation groups, and businesses from across Arizona. Our member groups represent over 16,000 people from Arizona.

AZSFWC appreciates the opportunity provide comments on the Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Sport Fish Stocking Program managed by the Arizona Game and Fish Department (Department). This program provides significant economic activity and recreational opportunities for local communities, our members, and visitors to Arizona. According to the most recent survey information (2013), recreational angling generated more than \$1.4 billion in revenue.

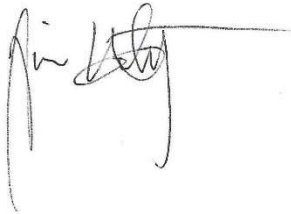
In 2020, the Department sold over 270,000 fishing licenses, which in turn generated more than \$13 million in revenue to support conservation of sport and native fish. Recreational angling in Arizona is highly dependent on rearing and stocking of hatchery-raised fish, actions which are covered under the draft EA.

We appreciate that this EA was prepared as a collaborative effort between the Department and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), a partnership approach that befits the respective authorities of the two agencies while increasing the efficiency of planning under NEPA. AZSFWC understands that the Proposed Action

will support increased angling opportunities, while providing flexibility to modify stocking activities that could be affected by ongoing and potential future drought conditions across the state.

The Proposed Action also strikes a reasonable balance between management of sport fish and conservation of native aquatic species. Accordingly, AZSFWC supports the Proposed Action as written and feels that the analysis and proposed conservation measures warrant a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and Service approval of Sport Fish Restoration Act grant for continued implementation of the Department's Sport Fish Stocking Program.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Unmacht", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Jim Unmacht
Executive Director