

Lake Havasu Fisheries Improvement Partnership

Background -

Lake Havasu is situated on the lower Colorado River inundating 30 miles of the border between California and Arizona. This 21,000 acre reservoir was created by the construction of Parker Dam in 1940 to serve as a point of diversion for the Southern California Aqueduct, and now serves a similar purpose for the Central Arizona Project. Today, nearly 30 million Americans depend on this water and reside within a four hour drive of this reservoir that arguably accommodates the highest recreational boating usage of any water in the west.

In 1993, reservoir managers noted significant declines in angler catch rate/access, and native fish abundance, so a Partnership was formed to remedy each problem. This comprehensive management approach envisioned improvement of 875 acres of fish habitat, building at least six free public fishing areas, and stocking 30,000 each of 12" long endangered razorback sucker and bonytail chub. The cost estimate for these goals was \$28 million. All those goals, except one public fishing area, have been completed since 2004 at a cost of less than \$17 million. Since this investment, angler use days have quadrupled, while increasing satisfaction, and stocking no sport fish. One of the few reproductive populations of razorback sucker in the basin has been established, and a 2001 economic report determined the improved fishery benefits the regional community by a conservative \$38 million/year.



This Bureau of Land Management has always led this partnership that has been officially supported by Arizona Game and Fish, California Fish and Game, Bureau of Reclamation, Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey, and the private-non profit organization Anglers United. The community has supported this work with over 200,000 volunteer hours, and contributions from many other industries, private and public organizations.

Problem and Opportunity -

Since completion of these goals, partners have cooperated to maintain, and monitor improvements as well as cooperate to balance diverse recreational and community growth issues with T&E fish conservation, invasive species, water quality, and shoreline stability challenges. This partnership has

always operated on a voluntary contribution basis that is proving to be a serious problem in these financial times with mounting environmental concerns.

Consequently a new program plan is being prepared that defines cooperative funded “Core” work to meet adaptive program goals. The plan goes further to establish other agreed project tasks that enable long term comprehensive fishery management objectives, but are un-funded. Our opportunities in these unfunded projects better engages the community to truly affect long term program success.

Proposed Conservation Actions -

Program Partners have determined the following actions to be very important in expanding basic “CORE” management actions to a broader program level that satisfies management goals for sustained resource productivity and community health. The following tasks are agreed by partners to be essential for long term success, but are currently unfunded.

1. User/creel survey – This would be an interstate cooperative between Arizona and California who are both program partners and would be supported by partners.
2. Youth education & employment, volunteer recognition – Involvement of youth brings energy, community connection, and ideas.
3. Shoreline stabilization pilot project – Boat usage on this lake is one of the highest in the country and is often suspect as a cause for riparian wetland and shoreline degradation.
4. Establish a coordinated aquatic/riparian vegetation monitoring strategy – Quagga mussel invasion has clarified the water column, enabling aquatic vegetation to expand. The risk of further invasive plant species entering the system is high.

Long Term Benefits -

Lake Havasu is a dynamic reservoir system experiencing rapid growth with high recreational, diverse water, and critical aquatic habitat demands. Our partners recognize the importance of employing integrated, adaptive management tools to sustain our fishery resource goals which all beneficial uses of the reservoir share in common. Our partnership is and has been long term. The cooperative plan we are developing together appreciates the need to expand our partnership and educate the community regarding the diverse benefits of our actions to the community’s future. The actions proposed above are all very important, but un-funded parts of our long term plan. Identification of a funding mechanism for one, part, or all of these listed tasks could generate new partners, but would certainly enable completion of an essential component to our long term mission to sustain productivity of the fishery for the good of the dependant community. Ultimately, each of these tasks are essential in bringing awareness to the community, recruiting stakeholders, and perfecting a “Coordinated Lake Havasu Management Plan” that uses fish habitat health as an indicator of capacity thresholds.

Estimated Costs –

The following estimates are seed money to both refine the concept and generate matching funds or contributions from Partner and supportive organizations to complete the task.

Task	Description	Cost Estimate
User/Creel Survey	Repeat the 2001 survey that assessed customer satisfaction, and socio economic benefits of the L. Havasu fishery program.	\$20,000.
Youth Education & jobs	Training, materials and field trips for teachers to emphasize fishery educational tools for community elementary schools.	\$10,000
Organic shoreline Stability Pilot Project	This pilot project would design and expedite native vegetative armor for shoreline stability. Conditions would be monitored, shared with managers, and successful ideas transferred to other sites.	\$15,000
Coordinated Aquatic Vegetation Monitoring	The lake is inhabited by milfoil and within 40 river miles the river is infected with salvinia. These funds would be used to develop public awareness plus, define and implement a cooperative monitoring protocol for lake vegetation.	\$15,000