

Desert Rivers Position Statement/2006

Scant rainfall, desert ecosystems and re-occurring drought patterns make Arizona's river environments especially vulnerable to human activities. Hundreds of migratory and residential bird species, aquatic and mammalian species with their associated riparian habitats depend upon the continuance of historical river and stream flows.

Federal, State, and Tribal Land and Wildlife Management Agencies, Legislators and the Public should mandate protection of Arizona's perennial desert rivers and their associated wetland corridors. Loss of our river environments severely impacts the economies and quality of life in adjacent communities as well as deprives current and future generations of high quality recreational opportunities.

Arizona has already lost 90% of its rivers, streams, and riparian areas. Those that remain are at immediate risk of loss due to antiquated or ineffectual water laws and regulatory mechanisms, the lack of legislative will to take action that will preserve them, and recently granted and planned new acquisition of groundwater pumping rights for residential, municipal, and industrial uses.

It is the position of the Arizona Wildlife Federation that Congress and Arizona's legislature must enact legislation that 1) Protects Arizona's perennial desert rivers and their associated tributaries and wetlands by prohibiting unsustainable overdraws of water within their watersheds, and 2) ensures sufficient in-stream flows necessary to meet the needs of wildlife, fish and plants that are dependent on those habitats.

It is the position of the Arizona Wildlife Federation that federal, state, and local governments must identify and assure implementation of best available water conservation methods, and that they coordinate and implement watershed protection measures to protect and improve natural watershed water storage processes.

It is the position of the Arizona Wildlife Federation that land management agencies protect Arizona's perennial desert rivers and their associated tributaries and wetlands from damage caused by unsustainable overdraws of water within their watersheds.