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## Wildlife News

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- Public meetings set on proposed Game and Fish Commission rule changes
- Fishing outlook great for southern Arizona
- Truckloads of fish removed as Phoenix canals undergo annual cleanup
- Alamo and Havasu lakes should be fishing hot spots

## Related Information

- [Archive Search](#)
- [Public Advisories](#)
- [Arizona Outdoor Calendar](#)
- [Call for Comments](#)

### **Public meetings set on proposed Game and Fish Commission rule changes**

The Arizona Game and Fish Department is conducting a series of public meetings on proposed Game and Fish Commission rule changes relating to miscellaneous licenses and permits, and on a new proposed rule for the taking and handling of wildlife. The new rule would place additional regulations on the use of spotlights when taking wildlife.

Part of the rule package strengthens the rules governing guides. For instance, the rule will be amended to state that the department "shall not issue a license to an individual who has been convicted of any violation for which a license to take wildlife can be revoked or suspended, if the applicant violated the law within five years before applying for the license." The department's objective is to eliminate those individuals who have demonstrated contempt for wildlife laws from becoming guides.

Another rule change would give special consideration to those individuals who voluntarily report their own wildlife violation immediately after committing it.

The following public meetings are scheduled:

- Monday, Feb. 14, 6 p.m., Game and Fish Department's Tucson regional office, 555 N. Greasewood Road, Tucson.
- Tuesday, Feb. 15, 6 p.m., Game and Fish Department headquarters, Roadrunner Room, 2222 W. Greenway Road, Phoenix.
- Wednesday, Feb. 16, 6 p.m., Game and Fish Department's Flagstaff regional office, 3500 S. Lake Mary Road, Flagstaff.
- Thursday, Feb. 17, 6 p.m., Game and Fish Department's Pinetop regional office, 2878 E. White Mountain Blvd., Pinetop.

Additional information on the proposed changes is available on the Game and Fish Department Web site. For more information, call (602) 789-3288 ext. 206 or send an e-mail to [Rulemaking@azgfd.gov](mailto:Rulemaking@azgfd.gov).

### **Fishing outlook great for southern Arizona**

Regional fisheries biologists are once again predicting some great fishing opportunities

based on last year's survey results and some increased water levels this year.

Here are a few for your "must fish" list in 2005:

An early hot spot should be **Cluff Pond #3** for black crappie. Fishing light jigs off the dam face and south of the boat ramp should produce plenty of action from black crappie.

"While you're in the Safford area, don't forget about **Roper Lake State Park** and the newest fishery in the area located at the Graham County Fairgrounds. This little lake is stocked with channel catfish and should provide some great opportunities for the junior anglers in the family," says Don Mitchell, a Game and Fish Department fisheries biologist based in Tucson.

**Pena Blanca Lake** continues to hide some quality largemouth bass that remain underfished. "Aquatic vegetation remains a problem at this lake during the warmer spring and summer months, but relief is on the way," Mitchell says.

The Game and Fish Department and the U.S. Forest Service are working together to reduce the overall amount of vegetation in the lake in key areas that should provide greater angler access in the near future. "Boat access is in great condition, and anglers should have no problem launching their boats this year," Mitchell advises.

**Patagonia Lake** continues to produce some of the biggest surprises for those addicted to sunfish. Surveys show strong numbers of large redears and bluegills, and plenty of bass up to 8 pounds.

"Die-hard catfish enthusiasts should definitely plan on spending their summer nights fishing for monster flatheads on Patagonia Lake," Mitchell says.

Flatheads in the 50-pound range were again reported last year. "Using 4 to 6 inch sunfish as live bait suspended near deep-water shelves along rocky shorelines can produce a violent tug of war that tests an angler and his equipment. Angler access at this lake should not be a problem," Mitchell says.

**Parker Canyon Lake** still harbors good numbers of northern pike as long as your arm, and the population continues to expand in this lake. Bluegill and redear numbers remain depressed, although anglers occasionally get lucky and find the occasional sunfish. Also, trout can be caught occasionally at this lake well into the summer. Angler access is not a problem.

**Arivaca Lake** continues down the road of recovery. The lake badly needs runoff. Currently, launching boats is extremely difficult and nearly impossible without four-wheel drive. Anglers should be cautious at this lake. "Angler reports of 80 to 90 largemouth bass a day were again common last spring and summer. While the majority of bass being reported were in the 1 to 2 pound range, reports of 5 and 6 pound fish are increasing," Mitchell says.

Anglers are reminded that all largemouth bass caught at Arivaca must be released immediately.

"As always, please check local conditions at these lakes prior to planning your trip. Summer rains or the lack of summer rains can cause these conditions to change rapidly,"

Mitchell says.

Those anglers who prefer the solitude of river fishing should plan a trip to the **Gila Box Riparian National Conservation Area** northeast of Safford. Plenty of fishing action can be found for the channel and flathead catfish that inhabit the rocky pools along the canyon walls.

### **Truckloads of fish removed as Phoenix canals undergo annual cleanup**

Old shoes, broken washing machines, and shopping carts aren't the only things pulled from the canals in Phoenix when the waterways are cleaned out each year. The Arizona Game and Fish Department and Salt River Project (SRP) held their annual canal cleanup on Jan. 10, and truckloads of fish were taken out of the water and moved to more appropriate places to live.

"Some of these fish are being placed in urban lakes, so Arizonans can enjoy fishing for them," says Rob Bettaso, an Arizona Game and Fish Department biologist. "Many native fish, including an occasional imperiled species, will be taken to safer locations, where they will have more protection."

Most people probably don't know that sections of the canals in Phoenix have electric barriers along the bottom. To find out more about the project, [click here](#).

### **Alamo and Havasu lakes should be fishing hot spots**

A hot fishing area this year should be Alamo Lake, which is located west of Wickenburg. Along the Colorado River, Lake Havasu should be a fishing hot spot, thanks to all the nutrient-laden runoff from Alamo.

### **Alamo Lake**

With the wet winter the state is having this year, Alamo Lake has been brought up to its upper operating elevation of 1,125 feet. "If these lake elevations continue, the fishing in the spring this year should be excellent for largemouth bass and crappie," says Brad Jacobson, a fisheries biologist for the Arizona Game and Fish Department stationed in Yuma.

Jacobson says there is currently a good number of bass over the slot limit and a couple of strong year classes of smaller bass that are just ready to enter the protected slot. Channel catfish is also expected to be excellent this year. In addition to excellent fishing, all of the boat ramps will be useable.

The store at the lake has closed, so you need to bring everything with you. If you run short of anything, you might be able to pick it up at the Wayside Inn or in the small community of Wenden. The certified scale that was located at the store is now located at the Alamo State Park Office.

Wildlife Manager Stewart Kohnke says he expects to see some 3.5-pound crappies being caught this spring. "Last year, anglers were catching some 3 pounders. Those fish should be about 3.5 pounds by now."

### **Lake Havasu & Topock Gorge**

Largemouth bass and smallmouth bass are expected to be good to excellent once the water temperatures exceed 58 degrees Fahrenheit at Lake Havasu and Topock Gorge. The size of the bass will range from 13 inches and up with an occasional fish greater than 4 pounds.

"Striped bass will continue to be excellent for small fish (12-18 inches) with occasional fish over 5 pounds," says Jacobson.

Channel catfish, as well as bluegill and redear sunfish, will be fair to good. "If you're interested in flathead catfish, fishing should be good at the lower end of the lake around the Bill Williams River Arm during late May and on through the summer. Sizes of flathead catfish can reach as high as 40 pounds," Jacobson says.

Because Alamo Lake received so much runoff, the Bill Williams River was running at almost 7,000 cfs during the January storms. That runoff provided much-needed nutrient inflows to Havasu. That should help fish grow-outs.

A good strategy for anglers is to fish along the mud line in the lake. Slow trolling can be effective, so can spooning.

#### **Colorado River (Parker Strip Area)**

The Parker Strip is expected to be good to excellent for smallmouth bass with fish over 2 pounds this spring. In addition, redear sunfish should be good to excellent in the pound-plus sizes. Channel and flathead catfish are always fair to good in this section of the Colorado River.

#### **Colorado River (between Palo Verde Weir and Walter's Camp)**

This area of the Colorado River should be fair for smallmouth bass (in the channel) upriver from the Interstate 10 bridge. Largemouth bass should be good in the backwaters throughout the entire area.

Channel and flathead catfish are always fair to good in this section of the Colorado River. Most flathead catfish will be in the 2- to 5-pound size range with an occasional fish over 20 pounds. The time to fish for both catfish species is from late spring through the end of summer. "Generally speaking, when fishing for catfish: the hotter the weather, the better the fishing," Jacobson says.

#### **Colorado River (between Walter's Camp and Picacho State Park)**

This section of the Colorado River is relatively remote and can only be accessed by boat from either end. Fishing is expected to be good to excellent for flathead catfish with sizes over 40 pounds. The best time will be late spring and on into the summer: the hotter the better. The various backwaters will be good for largemouth bass and other sunfish, such as bluegill and redear. Other species available in the main river are smallmouth bass, channel catfish, and striped bass.

#### **Colorado River (between Picacho State Park and Imperial Dam)**

This area is expected to be good to excellent for largemouth bass, channel catfish, and flathead catfish. Bass and channel catfish in excess of 5 pounds are present, along with flathead catfish as large as 40 pounds. Bluegills are also present in the various backwaters, and an occasional striped bass will be caught in the main river channel.

#### **Colorado River (between Laguna and Morelos dams)**

This area will be good for largemouth bass and flathead catfish. Bass in excess of 5 pounds is common, and flathead catfish over 20 pounds is a good bet.

"In this area, accessibility to the river is dependent on the amount of water being released. Usually shallow draft boats work best. The lower end has had some dredging work done,

and larger boats will be able to get on the river there," says Jacobson.

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