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ADEQ Awards \$212,000 Water Quality Improvement Grant to Provide Toilets for Campers, Hikers Visiting Fossil Creek

PHOENIX (July 14, 2009) – Arizona Department of Environmental Quality Director Benjamin H. Grumbles announced today the award of a \$211,825 grant to Coconino National Forest to set up as many as 10 portable toilets along the middle reach of Fossil Creek, a tributary of the Verde River, during a press conference at Fossil Creek.

Fossil Creek, which is on the federal roster of Wild and Scenic Rivers, has become a popular tourist destination in recent years. Natural flows were restored to the creek in 2005 after its waters were diverted for nearly a century for hydropower generation. Non-native fish were removed from 9 miles of the creek in 2004.

However, because no restroom facilities are available in much of the area, Fossil Creek has been threatened by overnight camping and day-use activities. Coconino National Forest officials have recorded more than 100 campsites marred by trash, including human waste, along the creek in Gila and Yavapai counties.

Money from ADEQ's Water Quality Improvement Grant will be used to determine the best locations for toilets along a 4.6-mile stretch of Fossil Creek. The facilities will be installed by a Forest Service contractor and the sites will be monitored by Coconino National Forest staff and researchers with Northern Arizona University's School of Forestry to determine if the toilets are being used and recreation patterns in the area.

In addition, the Forest Service will launch a "Leave No Trace" public awareness campaign, which will include posted signs to remind campers how to properly dispose of human waste and trash. Forest Service officials discussed that campaign and other Fossil Creek updates at the Tuesday press conference.

"Great progress has been made in restoring this riparian area, and it's essential that the gains are not lost," said ADEQ Director Benjamin H. Grumbles. "Fossil Creek is one of the crown jewels of Arizona's back country and ADEQ is pleased to provide funding for this project."

The project is also funded by the Arizona Water Protection Fund and the U.S. Forest Service. ADEQ's Water Quality Improvement Grant program is funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency under the Clean Water Act.

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