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CONTACT: Mark Shaffer, Director of Communications, (602) 771-2215

## **ADEQ Grants Arizona Game & Fish Department \$74,000 to Protect Little Colorado River and Threatened Species**

PHOENIX (June 18, 2009) – More than 1,000 feet of eroding stream banks along the Little Colorado River in Apache County will be repaired to help protect two threatened fish species under a \$74,145 Water Quality Improvement Grant awarded by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality to the Arizona Game and Fish Department.

The affected area, in the 357-acre Wenima Wildlife Area about 3 miles northwest of Springerville, has been owned by Game and Fish since 1993. It is home to two threatened fish species, the Little Colorado spinedace and the Little Colorado sucker.

Under the ADEQ grant, volunteers and Game and Fish employees will remove soil from eroding banks, landscape the banks, and place vegetation arranged as barriers, all of which will reduce the amount of sediment entering the river.

“ADEQ is pleased to fund this project, which will help to protect Arizona’s precious water resources,” said ADEQ Acting Director Patrick J. Cunningham. “ADEQ is always pleased to partner with Arizona Game and Fish, and we appreciate that they and citizen volunteers are rehabilitating this very special wildlife corridor.”

The previous owners had farmed and grazed cattle along the banks of the river, and tried to straighten its course, which reduced vegetation and increased erosion. A 2002 study by ADEQ and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency listed this part of the river as impaired.

The grant also will fund a public information campaign to alert residents to the importance of the habitat and the restoration work. Game and Fish is contributing \$35,250 in matching funds plus \$14,792 in volunteer labor and donated services.

ADEQ’s Water Quality Improvement Grant program is funded by the EPA under the Clean Water Act.

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