

**Phoenix Area Office
Phoenix, Arizona**

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Bureau of Reclamation seeks public comments on Maricopa County's plan for managing Agua Fria Conservation Area

Before preparing a draft Environmental Assessment on a proposal by a partnership of federal, state and county agencies to amend the management plan for the Agua Fria Conservation Area at Lake Pleasant Regional Park, the Bureau of Reclamation is seeking public input on the issues and concerns that should be addressed in that document.

An Environmental Assessment is required prior to any change in the management plan because the park is located on Reclamation project lands, even though it is managed by Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Dept.

The AFCA consists of 2,405 acres in the northeast portion of the park. It is a natural, environmentally sensitive area intended to remain relatively undisturbed to preserve the native environment. In recent years, activities such as shooting, trash dumping, off-road vehicle travel, vandalism, and criminal activities degraded cultural and natural resources of the AFCA and created a public hazard.

Currently, the area is closed. The proposed three-phase plan would allow limited access for day-use only on a seasonal basis (generally November through May) when park hosts would be on-site. Boat ramp(s), parking, rest rooms, and permit-only camping would eventually be phased in. The proposed plan allows access and recreational opportunities within the AFCA for responsible users while providing protection to the natural and cultural resources of the area.

The public is invited to send in comments regarding any issues and concerns that should be addressed in the EA. In addition, there will be a public meeting hosted by the Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department on February 4, 2009, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Desert Outdoor Center, Lake Pleasant Regional Park, 41402 N. 87th Avenue, Peoria, Ariz.

The full Notice of Public Scoping, the proposed management plan, and a map of the subject area can be viewed on the Phoenix Area Office website at <http://www.usbr.gov/lc/phoenix/> or a hard copy can be obtained by calling Reclamation's Environmental Resource Management Division at 623-773-6251 or e-mailing rkonst@lc.usbr.gov.

Questions regarding the scoping notice may be directed to Sandra Eto at 623-773-6254. Comments should be mailed to Eto at the Bureau of Reclamation, Phoenix Area Office, PXAO-1500, 6150 West Thunderbird Rd., Glendale AZ 85306-4001 or faxed to (623) 773-6481, no later than February 20, 2009.

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Reclamation is the largest wholesale water supplier and the second largest producer of hydroelectric power in the United States, with operations and facilities in the 17 Western States. Its facilities also provide substantial flood control, recreation, and fish and wildlife benefits.