

Editorial: Trust needs restoration at Fossil Creek

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On one hand, the Arizona Game & Fish Department has good intentions in trying to find a way to gradually change the usage of Fossil Creek. There is obviously a goal of getting rid of the partying trashers that have been the bane of the area since the hydroelectric plant was shut down. One way some in the department think that can be achieved is by replacing them with catch-and-release fishermen.

On the other hand, the department has some trust issues that seem to be feeding a divide between it and other groups wanting to protect Fossil Creek.

There are those who feel their environmental concerns on myriad issues fall on deaf ears at the Game & Fish Department. And clearly such groups as the Center for Biological Diversity do not trust the department to do right by the chubs (the so-called Verde trout) that enjoy the waters of Fossil Creek.

Instead of growing into a true collaboration, the efforts to restore and preserve the pristine quality of Fossil Creek are little more than a battlefield. Instead of hearing each other, each side is spinning data into its own agenda.

Unfortunately, it looks more and more like Game & Fish versus everybody else when it comes to the chub. Besides the CBD, that "everybody else" includes the Bureau of Reclamation, the Yavapai-Apache Nation, the Audubon Society and assorted environmental groups.

Many groups care about the fish in the creek, but Game & Fish is the organization that has the primary responsibility of protecting them. Today's public hearing on the Verde trout fishing season is the opportunity for the department to demonstrate it can be trusted with this charge, that it

does listen to all evidence and that it will take the best actions on its good intentions to protect the vulnerable.

Trust, as much as Fossil Creek, needs to be restored.