What Makes Fossil Creek Special?

Fossil Creek is one of only two wild and scenic rivers in Arizona.

Fossil Creek is fed by springs coming from the cliffs of the Mogollon Rim. Over 30 million gallons of water are discharged each day at a constant 70 °F. The high mineral content leaves travertine dams and deposits, giving rise to fossil-like features.

In 2005, Arizona Public Service (APS) decommisioned the Fossil Creek Dam and Flume, restoring full flows to Fossil Creek.

Fossil Creek is a rare riparian area within an otherwise arid landscape. Many plants and wildlife depend on Fossil Creek for habitat, including otters, beavers, leopard frogs, and common black hawks.

Fossil Creek has a number of Dízhé’é (Western Apache) cultural sites. The Dízhé’é lived along Fossil Creek for generations and several families consider this to be their homeland.

Native-Only Fishery

After massive efforts, Fossil Creek is now a native only fishery. It is illegal to introduce, release, or move any fish, amphibian, or crayfish into or around Fossil Creek. Fossil Creek is a seasonal catch and release fishery for roundtail chub and headwater chub. It is an artificial fly and lure fishery, and only single barbless hooks may be used. It is your responsibility to know and observe Arizona Game and Fish Department regulations.

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Attention—New Rules for You at Fossil Creek

The Forest Service has new rules for camping, fires, and off-road driving for the Fossil Creek area. More than 90,000 people visit this area each year. Because of the heavy use, Fossil Creek is being “loved to death”—damaged by wood cutting, fires, new roads, trash, and human waste.

In 2009, Fossil Creek was designated by Congress as a national wild and scenic river. The Forest Service must, by law, protect this special place. Over the next few years, the Forest Service will work with the public to develop a long-term plan for the area. In the meantime, interim rules aim to protect the Fossil Creek area. Please respect and abide by the rules listed on the map side of this brochure.

How Can You Help?

- Obey all camping and fire rules.
- Stay on designated roads and trails.
- Use the provided porta-potties or bury your waste 6 inches deep and at least 200 feet from any water source.
- Bag your trash and take it home.

Please respect the river!
Fossil Creek Area Regulations

It is your responsibility to know and obey national forest rules. Violations are punishable by a fine of up to $5,000 and/or 6 months in jail.

- Camping is prohibited within a quarter mile either side of Fossil Creek from the Old Fossil Creek Dam, downstream to Fossil Creek Bridge.
- Camping is allowed downstream of Fossil Creek Bridge if your camp is at least 100 feet from the edge of the creek. Camping is also allowed upstream of the Old Fossil Creek Dam.
- Campfires are prohibited within a quarter mile of Fossil Creek from the head of Fossil Creek, downstream 12 miles to Ike Saddle near milepost 4 on Forest Road 502.
- Driving off road is prohibited.
- The construction of new campsites or the improvement of existing campsites is prohibited.

Information Hotline: (928) 226-4611