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Comments: In consideration of the designation of the Upper Verde River as wild and scenic plus the possibility of the inclusion of two fish barriers within that stretch to facilitate the return of native fish species to the river [mdash]

It is worth noting in this consideration that the USFS's own scientists determined that the fish those proposed barriers are supposed to benefit began to do less well in the Upper Verde when the river's ecology began to undergo ecosystem changes, which the agency's own scientists associated with removal of livestock grazing from the riparian area along the river in the 1990s. In fact, when that was happening, some of those scientists gave the nickname "The Little Slice of Heaven" to a private property stretch of the Upper Verde, which continued to be grazed (until recently) and did not experience the ecological, native fish unfriendly deterioration experienced by the part of the river from which grazing was removed. Note that since the native spinedace disappeared from the Verde calls have increased to elevate its designation from "threatened" to "endangered." Similar alarms have been sounded regarding other native fish similarly effected by this move.

In light of the fact that "the Little Slice of Heaven" remained in healthy, native fish friendly condition as it continued to be grazed in an ecosystem-friendly fashion, shouldn't the USFS be considering restoring grazing to land along the river as a more effective means to restore it to suitable habitat for the native fish for which rock barriers are being proposed as a means to enable their restoration? If that were to be done, not only could the extirpated native fish species be restored, but the Verde could return to the wild and scenic (and ecologically functional) condition which earned it consideration and support for Wild and Scenic designation in the first place. If that were done, there would most likely be no need for the inappropriate and unnecessary rock and concrete barriers that threaten Wild and Scenic Designation or at least make it questionable if not contradictory.

One aspect of the fish barrier solution that needs to not be overlooked is the fact that when it was proposed one element it included was the addition to the river of a piscicide or fish killing chemical, i.e. rotenone (otherwise known as "rat poison") to help remove the non-native predatory fish that were decimating the native species, such as spinedace and loach minnows, and assumedly would continue to do so. Since rotenone has been associated with causing Parkinsons disease in humans, it would seem that reviving the river by restoring functional herd grazing (an aspect of its ecosystem that dates back hundreds of thousands of years via bison, elk, etc.) would be a much better way of achieving the goals of returning the Upper Verde to wild, scenic, and natural conditions. Most importantly it would enable the native fish, birds and other wildlife of the Upper Verde's riparian area to repopulate their homeland most effectively, cause fewer negative impacts, and have a much greater chance of success.

Consider the included (attached) photos as evidence of these observations. (Photos of how "The Little Slice" stretch of the river has changed since grazing was recently removed will be submitted soon.)