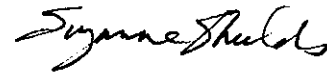


**DATE:** March 31, 2021



**TO:** C. H. Huckelberry  
County Administrator

**FROM:** Suzanne Shields, P.E.  
Director

**SUBJECT: Conservation Effluent Pool Water for the Pima County Regional Flood Control District's Agua Nueva Riparian Project**

The Conservation Effluent Pool (CEP) was first established in 2000 in a Supplemental Agreement between Pima County and the City of Tucson (City) to provide authority and framework that designates 10,000 acre-feet of effluent per year to provide a dependable water source for the establishment of riparian habitat projects. The effluent for the CEP is generated at Pima County's two major wastewater reclamation facilities, Agua Nueva and Tres Rios, located adjacent to the Santa Cruz River.

The water quality of the effluent discharged into the Santa Cruz River has significantly improved as a result of upgrades made to the two wastewater reclamation facilities, and the improved water quality has allowed Gila topminnow to re-establish in the Santa Cruz River.

There are two kinds of CEP requests: A request of water for riparian habitat, or a request of support to help listed endangered species. The Regional Flood Control District (District) and the Regional Wastewater Reclamation Department (RWRD) made a request to the County and City for a share of the CEP to maintain the habitat of the Gila topminnow, an endangered species, in the Santa Cruz River stretch between the Agua Nueva Wastewater Reclamation Facility, and north to at least the river's confluence with the Cañada del Oro Wash at the driest part of the year. Since the District and RWRD made a request for use of the CEP to support endangered species, a simple recognition that the application is complete is all that is required for approval.

The District is pleased to announce that our request for the CEP has been approved, which will help to maintain this critical aquatic habitat for endangered species. This is the first ever approval of the CEP for a riparian project, and it is a very important step in protecting the riparian habitat associated with the Santa Cruz River, which is the longest effluent-dependent reach in Arizona providing perennial flow to important wildlife habitat. Upstream and downstream of the effluent-dependent reach, the Santa Cruz River is an ephemeral river that flows mainly during the summer monsoon-dominated months or in response to winter frontal storms. During the last century and due to its interaction with humans, the river has experienced dramatic transformations making the perennial effluent reach all the more important. Except for a few isolated large winter events, the river only flows after heavy monsoon storms and is dry 70% of the time. The sporadic occurrence of these natural flows is insufficient to support the habitat for fish and aquatic invertebrates making effluent flows north of the wastewater reclamation facilities crucial for the ecosystem health of the river.

C. H. Huckelberry, County Administrator

**Conservation Effluent Pool Water for the Pima County Regional Flood Control District's Agua  
Nueva Riparian Project**

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With the CEP water resources secured for the Agua Nueva Riparian project, Pima County departments will begin developing concepts for improved flow conditions, including the establishment of aquatic pools, and will enhance native riparian habitat through the removal of invasive vegetation and reintroduction of native trees.

SS/tj

c: Carmine DeBonis, Jr., Deputy County Administrator – Public Works  
Linda Mayro, Director – Sustainability and Conservation  
Julia Fonseca, Environmental Planning Manager – Sustainability and Conservation Department  
Jackson Jenkins, Director – Regional Waster Water and Reclamation Department  
Eric Shepp, P.E., Deputy Director – Regional Flood Control District  
Andy Dinauer, P.E., Deputy Director – Regional Flood Control District