Indian Creek Fishery Survey

Indian Creek, Prescott National Forest, was surveyed on September 5, 2001 by Dave Weedman, Region VI Fish Specialist, Dana Bayer, Habitat Specialist and Albert Sillas, Verde Ranger District Biologist. A backpack electrofisher was used to sample Upper and Middle Water Springs on Indian Creek. UTM coordinates were taken with a Garmin GPS.

Upper Water Spring, Indian Creek

Upper Water Spring was sampled from FR 677 crossing at UTM 413246 3798621 upstream to fence boundary at UTM 413592 3798672, about 370 meters. A total of 630 seconds were expended to capture 79 Gila chub (GIIN), 30 longfin dace (AGCH) and 8 desert sucker (PACL). Of those, GIIN=10, AGCH=3, and PACL=1 were preserved in formalin as voucher specimens. Lowland leopard frogs, *Rana yavapaiensis*, were abundant throughout the sampled reach. A garter snake was also collected and photographed from within this reach.

Habitat conditions consisted of shallow pools separated by narrow shallow riffles. Water quality parameters were; conductivity=1580, pH=8.7 and temperature=17 Celsius at around 11:00 am. Numerous photographs of frogs, the snake and the habitat were taken. There is a man-made rock wall at UTM 413593 3798668 that forms a barrier to fish movement at low flows. All three species of fish were collected above this barrier as well as below. Cattle utilization of deer grass was estimated at 50-70%. The stream bottom was slightly entrenched in places, but broad and shallow in others. Banks were heavily trampled by cattle and there was little vegetation along banks.

Middle Water Spring, Indian Creek

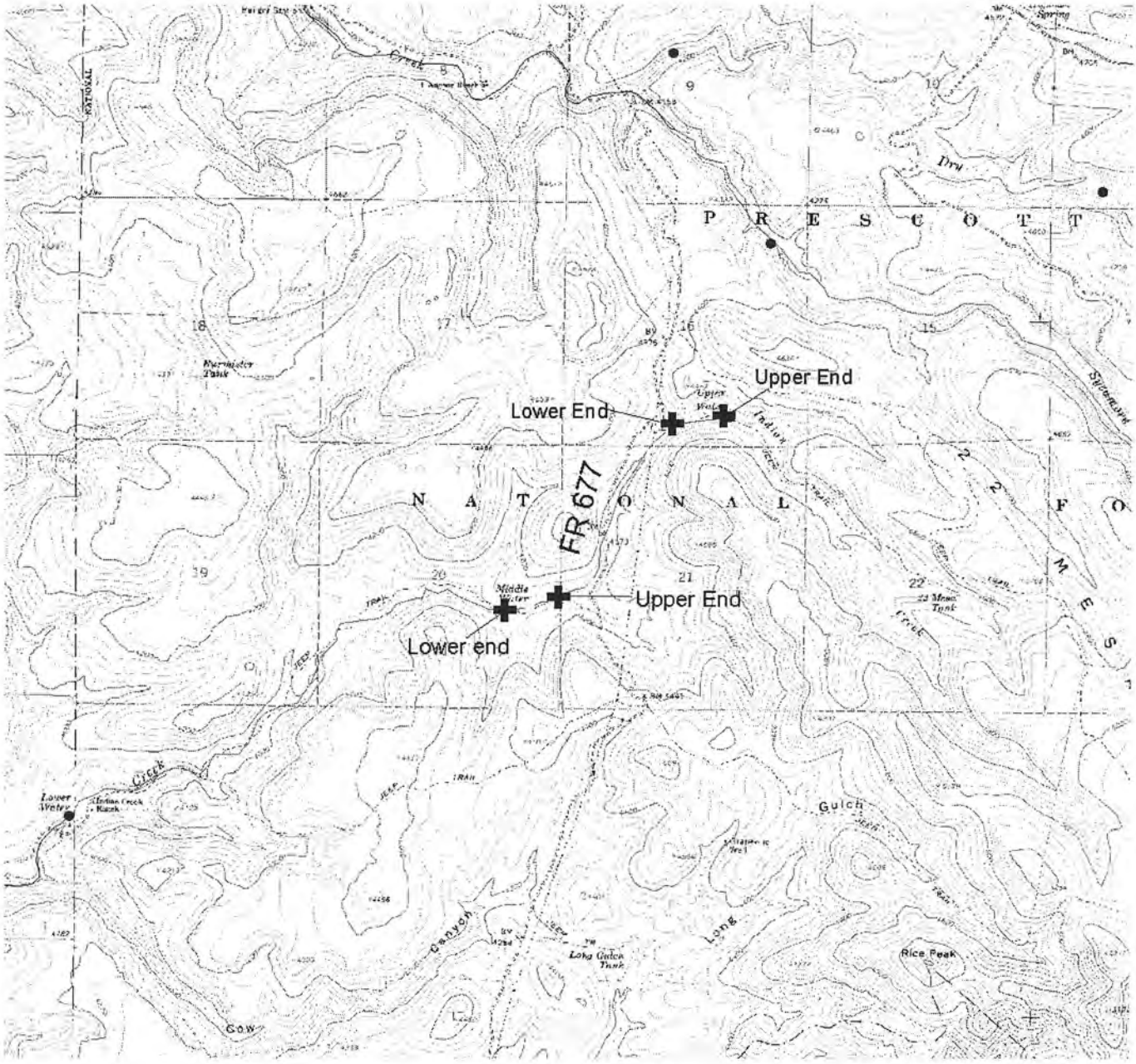
Middle Water Spring was sampled from UTM 412151 3797378 upstream about 400 meters to UTM 412503 3797468, at the Rice Peak Allotment boundary fence. Surface flows were not present at the fence line. A total of 654 seconds were used to collect longfin dace (n=150), Gila chub (n=13), and desert sucker (n=5), including young of each species. Voucher specimens were also preserved from these fish (AGCH=6, GIIN=5, PACL=1). Young of year fish of each species were present.

Habitat conditions were similar to Upper Water, except this channel was much more entrenched. The lower 50 meters was broad and shallow, however. Numerous leopard frogs were also present in this reach. Water quality parameters were; conductivity=1620, pH=8.9 and temp=25 Celsius. Juniper encroachment on the stream channel was severe, with little or no herbaceous ground cover. Cattle use was present, although lighter than at Upper Water.

Prepared and Submitted by:

David Weedman

David A. Weedman
Region VI Fisheries Specialist
September 10, 2001



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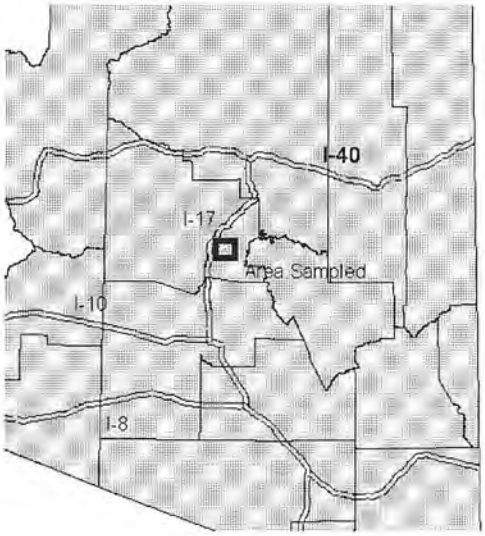

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Indian Creek Fish Survey
September 5, 2001

July 23, 2001

1922 E. Orion Street
Tempe, AZ 85283

Mr. James T. Gladen, Appeal Deciding Officer
Deputy Regional Forester
USDA Forest Service, SW Region
333 Broadway SE
Albuquerque, NM 87102

Dear Mr. Gladen,

As you know, I recently appealed the decision of the Prescott National Forest's Verde Ranger District to implement their livestock management plan for the Long Gulch grazing allotment.

One of the points of my appeal was that the project's EA did not contain sufficient information about the ecological condition of the allotment's riparian habitat at Middle Water Spring on Indian Creek. This riparian area was mapped by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service during the National Wetlands Inventory as a code RpFOMB, which means riparian-forested-mixed broadleaf.

Yesterday, a friend and I hiked into the upper Indian Creek basin because I wanted to take a look at Middle Water for myself. We had to park my 4WD vehicle about two miles away to the north, where Forest Road 677 leaves Sycamore Creek, because the hill up out of the creek's canyon was too steep and rough to drive. We each had a half gallon of water but we knew it would get hotter as the morning wore on and we'd probably need more. Still, we thought we'd be able to refill our canteens at Middle Water, or the Upper Water Spring, which we'd pass along the way.

Upon reaching Middle Water, however, we found numerous cattle camping out there and the water so fouled that we didn't want to chance using it. We were dive-bombed by a black hawk (*Buteogallus anthracinus*), but did not observe any amphibians or fish in the stream, although the cattle had muddied the water making it relatively opaque. The stream's banks were in terrible condition, due to the numerous cattle hooves. And most of the ground under the shade of the big, older riparian trees looked like the floor of a feedlot: just pulverized dirt, cowpies and flies. Obviously, what we saw conflicts with the Verde Ranger District's assessment that, "Indian Creek was verified as Properly Functioning and had no identifiable impacts from livestock grazing or trailing."

We began our hike back to the vehicle hoping we could find usable water at Upper Water, which we had passed without stopping on our way in. But again we found the water was so fouled by the cattle that were camped there that we were unwilling to risk drinking it.

(Upper Water Spring, by the way, is located on the neighboring Rice Peak grazing allotment. A newly discovered population of Gila chubs (*Gila intermedia*) inhabits it and we, indeed, observed fish that were too big to be longfin dace. Prior to yesterday's hike, it was my understanding that the Verde Ranger District had built a riparian exclosure around the spring to protect this isolated fish population from cattle. But there are only two very short pieces of fence completed and the cattle still have total access to the spring.)

About half way back from the spring to our vehicle we ran out of water. It was a very hot walk and there was no shade whatsoever. By the time we got to the vehicle we didn't feel very good. It's a sad situation, I think, when people cannot use the springs on our public lands because of cattle.

I took digital color photos during the hike and I will be sending copies to you, the Prescott National Forest Supervisor, and the Verde District Ranger as attachments to e-mail messages. I will also be posting some of them on my website at http://www.grazingactivist.org. I hope you will use this information to help arrive at a decision regarding my appeal.

Sincerely,

Jeff Burgess
Ph 602-417-4486 (day)
E-mail: jburgess@grazingactivist.org

Cc: Prescott National Forest Supervisor