

# ARIZONA BASS NATION

## Conservation Update

Don McDowell

Conservation Director

Summer 2014



1. **AZGFD Updates on recent, September 6<sup>th</sup>, Commission Rule 40 Fishing Regulations Change. Commission approved. Document attached in PDF format.**
2. **AZGFD Updater on the Page Springs Hatchery property acquisition. Commission approved. Document attached in PDF format.**
3. **AZGFD Final 2011 Environment Sportfishing Assessment has been released. Document attached in PDF format.**
4. **Grant requests have been prepared and submitted on the restoration of Roosevelt to mitigate the effects of the Gizzard Shad infestations to USFWS for lakes bottom mapping to determine suitable for habitat enhancement, implantation of artificial habitat, Reef Balls, and money for additional Florida Strain Fry stocking. Initially the USFWS denied the first round of grant, stating "Largemouth Bass are endangered species". The grants have been revised and are being resubmitted back to the service and private sector foundations to "Mitigate the effects of Aquatic Invasive Species". Same net end results, taking a different approach for the next round of grant cycles.**
5. **AZGFD has stepped up enforcement efforts on AIS protocols, "Clean, Drain and Dry", "Pull your Plug". Active enforcement patrols are targeting local lakes including Havasu.**
6. **Letter from Chairman of Gila County Roundtable sent to public officials on Florida Strain Stocking for Roosevelt.**

Supervisor Martin  
Mayor Evans  
Mayor McDaniel  
General Manager Leslie,

You may have heard that the Gila County Roundtable members have been meeting with the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AZGFD) to address concerns about the fishing conditions at Roosevelt Lake. Currently Roosevelt Lake's bass, crappie and bluegill populations are experiencing a decline in condition and numbers. This decline has been well documented over a four year period and is believed to be linked to a number of concerns including, annual reservoir fluctuation and the newly established gizzard shad population. These documented declines draw a parallel with the increase of negative communication from the public to the Department on bass size and catch rates at Roosevelt Lake in recent years. AZGFD has responded by stocking the lake with Florida strain fry bass that were donated by the Florida Wildlife Conservation Department. The survival rate of the fry bass will be around 1% so although this action will help, it is not the total solution to the problem. AZGFD is also working with the Tonto National Forest, U.S. Forest Service and several other stakeholders to develop and deploy habitat into the lake. These actions are directed at minimizing the impact that the gizzard shad are having on the lake.

AZGFD has also taken the unprecedented step of setting aside \$50,000 of matching funds to help restore Roosevelt Lake. A separate account has been established by AZGFD to collect private donations. The funds in this account will ONLY be used to improve Roosevelt Lake and the AZGFD will match every dollar contributed up to \$50,000. The AZGFD Branch Fisheries Chief Chris Cantrell is overseeing this program and will ensure the funds are directed appropriately. Naturally, the goal of the Gila County Roundtable is to raise \$50,000 of donations to maximize the matching funds offer. We have sent letters to business owners in Payson, Star Valley and Tonto Basin requesting donations to this fund. In the letters we stated that these donations are tax deductible and each business will receive a letter of acknowledgement for their contribution from the AZGFD. Private donation requests have also been made via the AZGFD website and Arizona based bass fishing websites. Chief Cantrell told me last week that we have just over \$2,700 in donations.

On June 14, 2014, the AZGFD will hold a Commissioner's Meeting in Payson. The Commissioners routinely hold these meeting in different locations around the State. We are requesting the roundtable members and many others to "show up in big numbers" to attend. During the meeting, I will be updating the Commissioners on this restoration program from a citizen's perspective. My presentation will be very positive, acknowledging the AZGFD and the Community for the efforts put forward to address this problem. I will also be recommending a long term strategy and future funding for continued development of the plan and implementation. One possible solution is to reopen a warm water hatchery that AZGFD owns and decided not to maintain several years ago. A significant portion of the donated funds would go towards purchasing fingerling bass which would be grown in the hatchery to a larger size. When released into the lake, the survival rate of these larger bass is in the 50% range. I invite each of you to attend this meeting to speak with the Commissioners on this important topic and if possible make a contribution to this project on behalf of your constituents in Rim Country and surrounding communities.

Thank you for helping our communities. If you have any questions or need additional information, do not hesitate to call.

Checks should be made out to:  
Arizona Game & Fish Department  
5000 W Carefree Hwy  
Phoenix, AZ 85086-5000  
Att: Chief Chris Cantrell

Regards,  
James Goughnour  
Rim Country Custom Rods  
Payson, AZ  
480-495-1351

- 7. The July Gila County Roundtable gained and update for the AZGFD on the testing elements and ongoing research efforts on the GS and effect thereof, for the balance of 2014 and into 2015. \$400,000 has been approved by the Commission to be put into Roosevelt Lake for 2015 fiscal year. We are continuing effect with the University of Arizona on the approved research efforts on the various targeted game species. Below is a recap of efforts to date.**

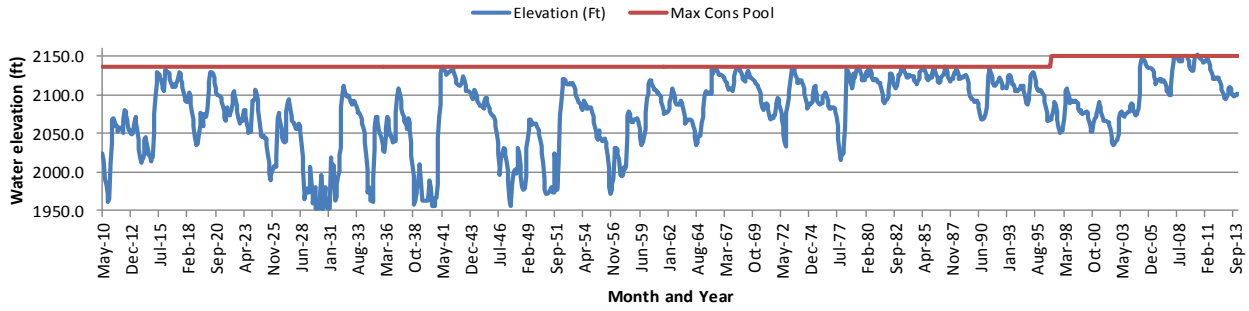
## **ROOSEVELT UPDATE FLORIDA STRAIN STOCKING**

Fishing media team, about a year ago a group of anglers from Gila County started meeting with the Arizona Game & Fish Department to express concerns about the deteriorating fishing conditions on Roosevelt Lake due to the rapid growth of gizzard shad in the lake. During a recent survey, AZGFD confirmed that over 30% of the fish in the lake are gizzard shad and the numbers of bass, crappie and bluegill have dropped dramatically. The Gila County Roundtable group and AZGFD have met several times to discuss ideas on how to improve the fishery. I'm happy to report that in early April, AZGFD will be restocking 400,000 Florida strain fry bass into Roosevelt Lake. In addition, meetings are on-going to determine types and locations of habitat that will be put into the lake. According to AZGFD experts, restocking and more habitats are the best ways to minimize the impact of the gizzard shad population.

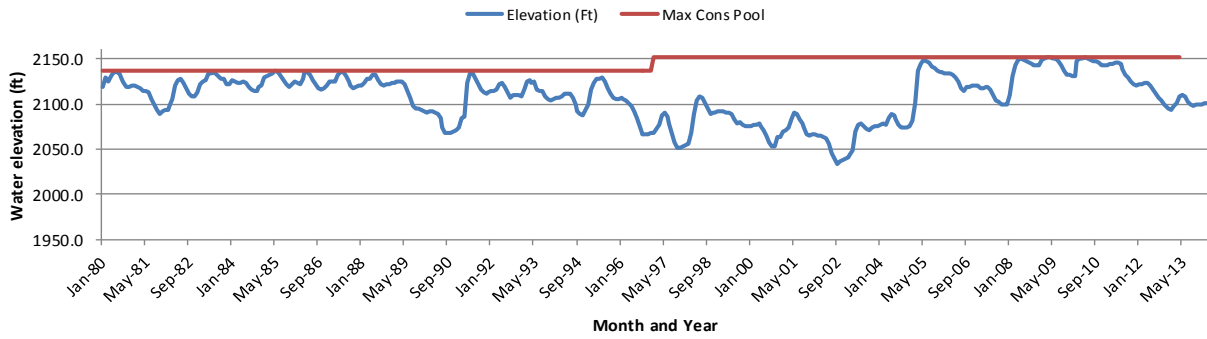
The first batch of Florida Strain Fry have been released into Roosevelt on Monday morning 7-Apr-14. Eight boats met the AZGFD Team to strategically release the first 200,000 FSB. Release location will be such to provide cover for the fry to take shelter and grow to a survivable size. The next batch of 200,000 were released several days later.

David Weedman from the Habitat Branch, power point presentation below shows pretty interesting details and stats on the Roosevelt Lake levels and fluctuations from 1910-2013. The other interesting graphics and reports shows the results of a Geologic Survey of silt accumulation within the lake channels which will be helpful to determine areas of new habitat placement. The most disturbing information is the prediction of lake levels in the fall declining to around the 35% range due to the lack of snow pack on the water shed. At risk with continuing low water levels is Golden Alga blow up of deadly toxins that could result in major fish kill in the lake system.

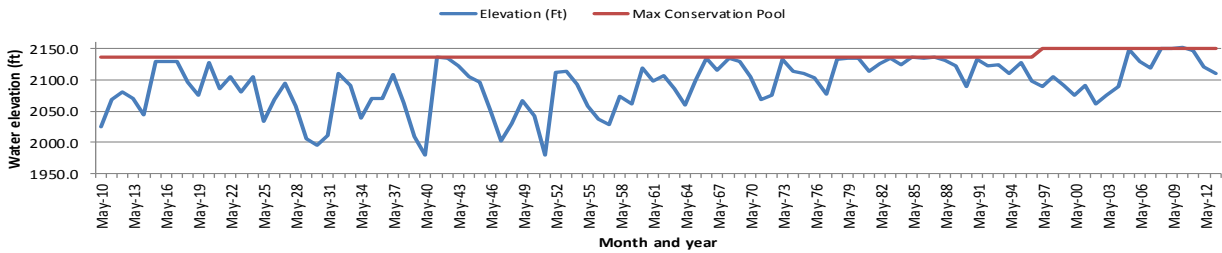
### Roosevelt Lake Water Level - First of each Month 1910-2014



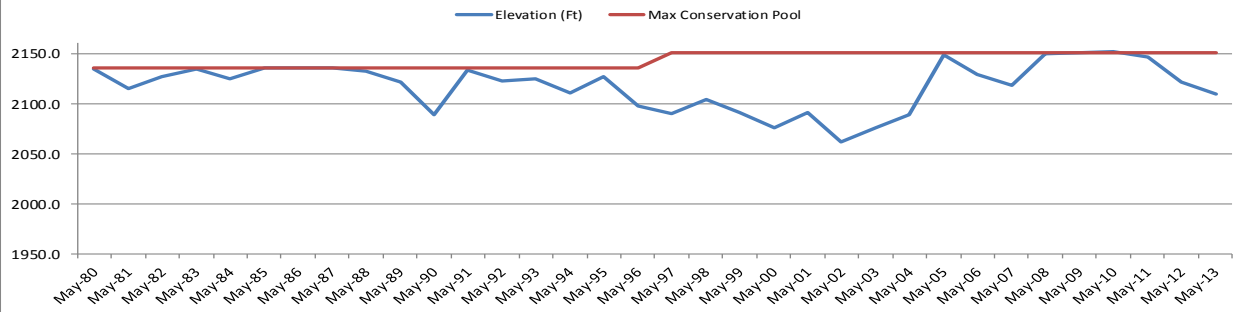
### Roosevelt Lake Water Level - First of each Month 1980-2014

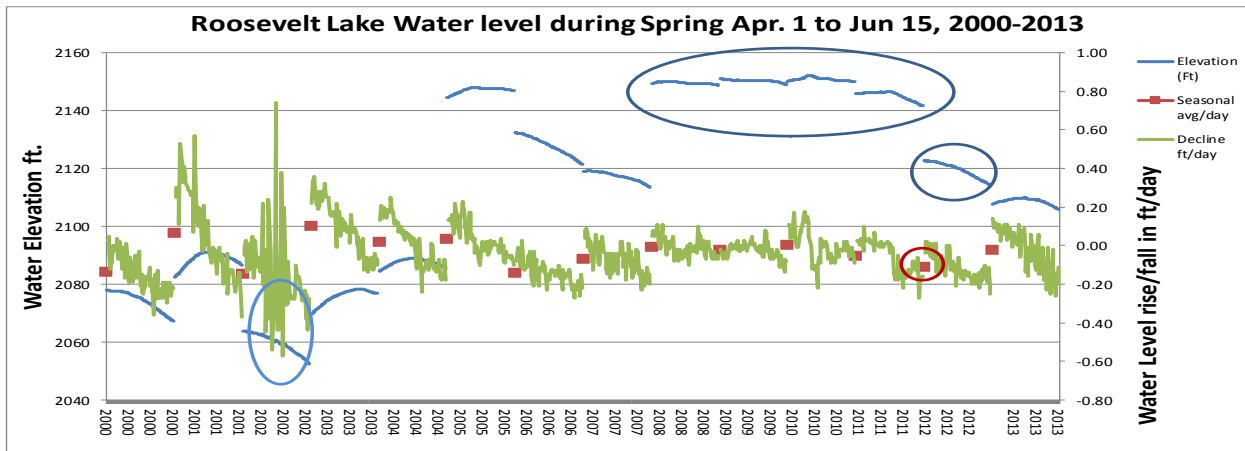


### Roosevelt Lake Water Level - May 1 - 1910-2013



### Roosevelt Lake Water Level - May 1, 1980-2013





**Observations**

1. 2008-2011 Spawning seasons saw no or limited decline in water level during the spawn
2. 2012 reservoir level decline averaging about .1 foot/day.
3. Hatching time for bass eggs is temp dependent and from 2-4 days.
4. Worst case historically of about 0.2 foot/day decline is not significant to spawning bass.
5. Worst case short term decline of 0.5 foot/day in **2002** may have been significant to spawning bass

## Roosevelt Lake Water level since 1997

| Lake Elevation Range | % of days in this range | Cum % of days at or above this water level | Acres in this range |
|----------------------|-------------------------|--|---------------------|
| 2150 to 2160         | 4.0                     | 4.0  | 1400.49             |
| 2140 to 2150         | 15.7                    | 19.7                                       | 1587.92             |
| 2130 to 2140         | 7.9                     | 27.6                                       | 1742.26             |
| 2120 to 2130         | 5.2                     | 32.9                                       | 1644.52             |
| 2110 to 2120         | 7.5                     | 40.4                                       | 1523.95             |
| 2100 to 2110         | 8.7                     | 49.0                                       | 1252.77             |
| 2090 to 2100         | 10.8                    | 59.8                                       | 1386.25             |
| 2080 to 2090         | 6.8                     | 66.6                                       | 1426.14             |
| 2070 to 2080         | 16.9                    | 83.5                                       | 1370.88             |
| 2060 to 2070         | 7.5                     | 90.9                                       | 1417.58             |
| 2050 to 2060         | 5.0                     | 95.9                                       | 1265.02             |
| 2040 to 2050         | 1.7                     | 97.6                                       | 1132.62             |
| 2030 to 2040         | 2.4                     | 100.0                                      | 627.57              |

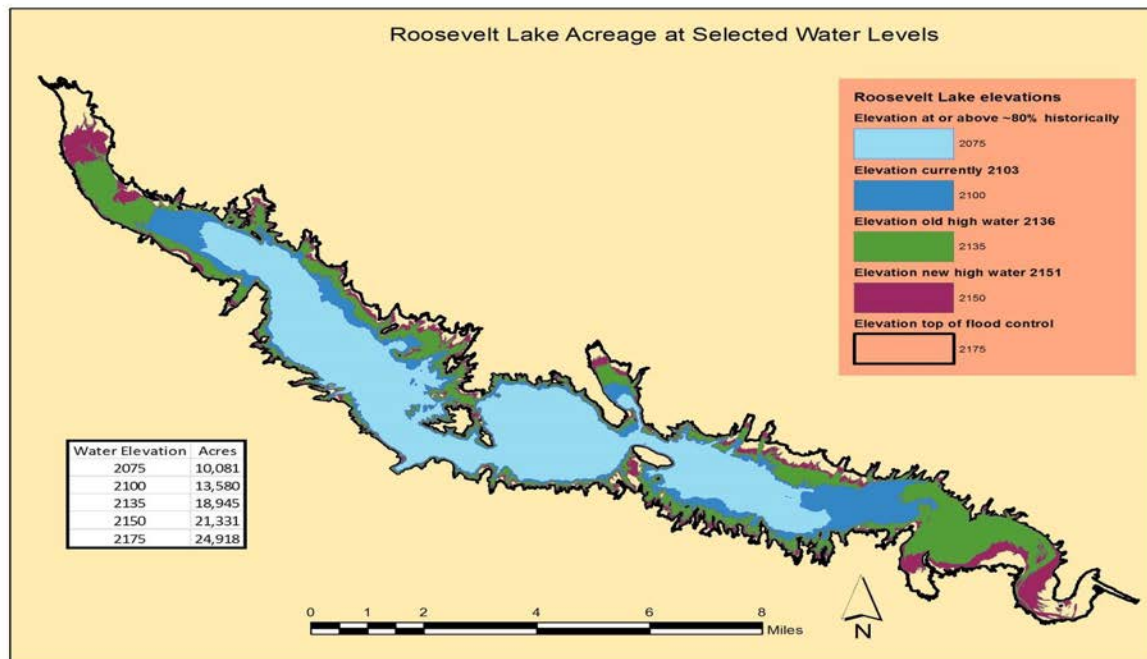
- Current shoreline elevation of ~2100' has been underwater for about **49%** of the time since 1997
- Old Highwater line of **2136'** has been underwater about **30%** of the time since 1997
- Structure placed at an elevation of **2080'** would be underwater or within 30' of surface elevation about **43%**
- Structure placed at an elevation of **2100'** would be under or within 30' of the surface **26.9%** of the time
- Roosevelt has been at or above full pool elevation of **2151'** about **4%** of the time.
- Since 1997, Roosevelt Lake has been at or below **2100'** **51%** of the time.

Roosevelt Lake at 2075', November 1999



Roosevelt Lake, Salt River Arm at 2142' elevation, November 2010. Green Line is water elevation of 2140'.





The lake currently is sitting at 39% of full pool. With the additional monsoon run off from the Salt River Drainage Water Shed bringing additional oxygenation and nutrient, we very well may dodge the impending Golden Alga bloom and associated fish kill.

**8. B.A.S.S. CD conference call last evening agenda:**

**Agenda:**

- B.A.S.S. Nation

Grant Programs Status:

Time for Proposals!

- AERF-APMS Award for aquatic plant management
- FishAmerica Foundation/BA.S.S. Nation Conservation Fund
- Friends of Reservoirs Foundation
- Berkley Conservation Institute Conservation & Member Recruitment/Retention Awards
- Shimano/BASS Youth Conservation Initiative
- MossBack Fish Attractors
- BoatUS Foundation
- Deadlines
- Reporting requirements, publicity
- Announcements at Classic
- Nationwide Insurance Promotion Brainstorming
- Status of Conservation on Bassmaster.com
  - Past history - page view stats for conservation pages
  - Content, content, content - funnel to Gene first
- Gene's Travel Schedule
- Regional Conference Calls
- Text Messaging vs. E-mail
- Open Forum

**Subject:** Conference Call Summary

We had a baker's dozen (13) on the call last night. Thanks to those who participated and to those other half dozen who e-mailed that you would be unable to call in. The rest of you...where were you? 13 out of 47 is pretty sad.

Well, here's what you missed....

1. I went over the basic information on the **grant & award programs** B.A.S.S. Nation clubs are eligible to compete for. AERF-APMS and the Berkley Conservation Institute awards are for project that you have completed in 2014. FishAmerica Foundation and Shimano are for funding new projects you will start in 2015. In the next few days you will be getting an e-mail on each of these grant/awards with the Request-for-Proposals & submission requirements. They will also be posted on Bassmaster.com soon. The **deadlines are November 30th** so you have 10 weeks to put together a submission. I'm still working with Mossback Fish Attractors and BoatUS Foundation on new programs.

For the **Shimano**/B.A.S.S. Youth Conservation Initiative, it is requires that you involve junior Bassmaster, high school or college B.A.S.S. members in the project. So work with your state's Youth Director to develop your proposals. We only got 3 good proposals last year and Shimano was VERY disappointed in the level of participation.

I will be glad to assist any of you with your proposals/applications...just call or e-mail me.

2. On the subject of grant funding, we discussed the **Nationwide Insurance contest** where BASS Conservation stands to win \$45,000 is we can get the members out to vote. How do we boost voting for B.A.S.S. Conservation? Bassmaster.com will be running an ad and post additional reminders, it will go out on B.A.S.S.' Facebook and Twitter feeds, it will be featured in the next B.A.S.S. Nation e-newsletter, and an e-blasts to all B.A.S.S. members for whom we have e-mail addresses. **States need to step up the outreach efforts**...send out mass e-mail reminders, get in on your state and club websites, and get it on local fishing message boards and your social media pages.

We want **pro anglers to endorse the cause** and the voting by 1) mentioning it on stage during the AOY Championship weigh-in, 2) I will shoot some short "PSA" type videos with some pros to post on the live blog on Bassmaster.com, and 3) get the pros to post it on their Facebook pages to take advantage of their social networks. I am driving from Oklahoma to Michigann for thee tournament with a PR guy who works with a number of pro anglers so I hope to get some other ideas from him.

3. I noted my travel schedule next year would be in part dependent on the tournament schedules for Elites, Opens, B.A.S.S. Nation, College and High School events but made the **offer to attend as many state functions as possible** if you need me there - meetings, legislative issues, guest speaker for a banquet. Let me know as early as possible of the dates and locations so I can try to work them into my schedule and meager travel budget.

4. Given the poor number of call-ins we wrestled with the idea of **regional conference calls**. The idea was that perhaps CDs in a region or BASS Nation Division might have more in common and the time-zone issues we face with coast-to-coast calls would be reduced. The final outcome of that discussion was to **split the county in half** for a first try and see if that helps participation, Focus on issues for those states. Of course the call would be open to everyone but the timing and agenda would be more customized to the target states. Those on



the call all felt that the interaction and exchange of information from the larger group was very worthwhile so we will not do away with whole-country calls but see if we can supplement them.

5. We also talked about using **text-messaging** more to interact with CDs as a supplement (not a replacement) to e-mail. Urgent messages, reminders, important notices could be sent by mass text with full details still coming via e-mail. I will explore this in the near future with some test messages to see how well it works.

6. We discussed ways to encourage **building conservation into the B.A.S.S. Youth programs** and utilizing our CDs as messengers for the cause. Joan Blankenship has developed and used a school curriculum called "Take B.A.S.S. to Class" that we are going to look at as a tool to get a conservation message into schools *and* help recruit those schools into the B.A.S.S. High School program. I will explore this Joan and with Youth Director Hank Weldon and report back.

7. We talked **politics**. Jim Howard said he was about to become chair of the Alabama Sportsman's Foundation which is the umbrella organization for all the hunting and fishing groups in his state. This group acts as an advisory council to the legislature and the state agency. Many states have such as groups but not all of our CDs are plugged-in. I've asked Chris Horton with the **Congressional Sportsman's Foundation** to compile a list of these organizations so that we can get each CD connected in their state if they are not already engaged. It can be a great way to ease your way into the political arena - as part of a group rather than a maverick. It also gives you the opportunity to make sure that bass fishing interests are being considered when the group makes proposals to the legislature or agency on natural resource issues.

Those of you on the call...anything substantial I missed? Please reply-all if you have other items.

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