



## **Endangered Fish Rescued from Fire in Arizona**

ARIZONA - While firefighters work to protect people and homes from Arizona's Cave Creek Complex fire, smaller victims were saved on June 28 as a team of eight biologists rescued about 200 Gila topminnow that were in danger of suffocating from sediment accumulation due to the fire.

Jeff Whitney, a desert fish coordinator for the Service's Southwest region, and former regional fire management coordinator there. He was coincidentally the Incident Commander for this fire team, and made the decision that the fish rescue be attempted.

Wildlife workers from the Arizona Game and Fish Department, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Forest Service and others hiked four miles near the huge fire to Lime Creek to rescue the fish. The workers used nets to remove the fish from the creek and carried them out in bucket-like containers rigged like backpacks.

The Lime Creek Gila topminnow population is the longest re-established population the fish, as well as one of the largest, making it invaluable to the species' recovery. The fish were taken to a hatchery in Page Springs until Lime Creek is secure and clean enough for their return.

"This was a tremendous opportunity to use the long-term partnership between all these agencies to move an endangered species out of harm's way," said Whitney.

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