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NEWS RELEASE

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Game & Fish to monitor fish at Lake Powell, Lees Ferry, for mine spill impacts

PHOENIX -- The Arizona Game and Fish Department, in cooperation with the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ), will collect a broad spectrum of environmental samples, both biological and physical, from the Arizona portion of Lake Powell as part of continued monitoring for potential impacts of the Colorado Gold King Mine spill.

The Lake Powell sampling effort will be followed by similar collections on the Colorado River at Lees Ferry, about 15 miles downstream of Glen Canyon Dam.

All samples, including fish tissue samples, will be collected by mid-October and analyzed for heavy metals. These data sets will be used to compare historical and future data in an effort to document any potential negative impacts to Lake Powell and the blue ribbon trout fishery at Lees Ferry.

Last week ADEQ completed sampling to characterize baseline water quality in Lake Powell and the Colorado River at Lees Ferry and submitted those samples for analysis with the fastest possible turnaround time. ADEQ expects to receive lab results soon, which it will compare with Arizona surface water quality standards and historical data.

The already diluted contaminant plume will become even more diluted in Lake Powell. For context, the plume is estimated to be about nine acre feet of water, whereas the lake currently contains about 13 million acre feet of water at 50 percent capacity. Because of the retention time in Lake Powell, biologists estimate the plume may take 18 months to two years to reach Glen Canyon Dam.

Although the dilution and travel times are great, the potential impact, both short term and long term, to fish and other natural resources in Arizona must be properly evaluated, said Fisheries Chief Chris Cantrell.

Game and Fish will continue to work with ADEQ and other agencies in evaluating the environmental issues that may develop from the Gold King Mine spill.

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