

AGUA CALIENTE PARK POND RESTORATION- FAQ

Why was the pond water such a strange or different color?

As part of the Pond 1 restoration project, the soils in the bottom of the pond were mixed with a liquid polymer emulsion (vegetable oil mixture) to reduce water seepage out of the pond and conserve water. After the pond was filled with water, the last coat of the sealing mixture was added to the water to seal the sides. The emulsion is a milky white color and the absorption and reflection of sunlight created the turquoise blue hues several weeks ago. The sealant and the white color have now settled out and the pond water has returned to its natural appearance.

Are the turtles okay? Some of the turtles have stuff stuck to their shells. What is that?

The turtles are fine. Before pond restoration began, staff captured and re-homed over 30 red-eared sliders. Several turtles made the choice to walk down to the peace and quiet of Pond 2. At the conclusion of construction the “pond 2 turtles” were among the first wildlife to return to the restored main pond. Some of the vegetable oil sealant that was in the water got onto the turtles. The sealant is a plant-based product that is not toxic to wildlife. You probably haven’t thought about this before but, turtle shells are not self-cleaning. Turtles can’t preen or groom themselves in the way a bird or a mammal would. The bits of sealant stuck on their shell is something like getting bubblegum in your hair, you may have a bad hair day but it won’t do any real harm. We are watching the turtles to see that they continue to thrive. If at some point we think it is warranted, we will capture, wash, and return the turtles to the pond.

Where are the fish?

We were hoping you would ask – The first round of native fish introductions is happening over the next few weeks. Our first step was to reintroduce longfin dace, a species native our area. Dace are the most common native fishes in our natural waterways. Look for them in the spring area near the parking lot. We will closely monitor these fish to see how well they are doing. A next step will be to introduce native Gila Topminnow to the main pond to control mosquito larva. The Gila topminnow (*Poeciliopsis occidentalis*) is a small (1-2 inch) fish native to our area. Topminnow are in the same family as guppies, which bear live young. Listed as endangered in 1967, due to habitat loss and predation and competition from nonnative species, Arizona Game and Fish and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and their partners have worked to recover the species by establishing new populations within its historical range.

In the coming months we are also planning on introducing desert pupfish, another native fish that is on the Endangered Species list. We are also looking at the possibility of stocking some larger native fish in the future such as the threatened Gila Chub. Currently, there is a grass carp in the main pond and others will be stocked in the future to help control aquatic vegetation in the pond. With time, the rich diversity of plants, fish, and wildlife will return to the ponds. We hope you are as excited as we are to see the pond’s habitats develop over time.

We need your help! Be a supporter and steward of the unique natural resources of Agua Caliente Park.

Never release any kind of animal in the pond or at the park. If you see someone releasing any pets or wildlife at the park please speak up and inform park staff.

For more information and updates visit www.pima.gov/nrpr or call **520-724-5000**