Gila River/Gila Wilderness Run Trip Report
Gila National Forest
April 6-9, 2023
Flow 300-400 cfs.

Shortly after Alum Canyon there is a short but mandatory portage. We lined around the end of the strainer on river right. There is another root ball/strainer complex just below this one that we ran on river left after a careful approach.

The strainer, where there was a recent fatality on the wilderness run on the Gila River in New Mexico, has been joined by another from the other side of the river. The crowns of the trees are interlocked, creating a full cross-river blockage. Since this trip, a crew recovering the boats and gear from the fatality cut a passage through the new strainer on river right, allowing passage for rafts up to 14'. The strainer is just downstream of a blind curve blocking view of the new tree that is down. Approximate coordinates derived from map - 33.09081, -108.28327. Approximately mile 14, just above hot springs that are on river left. Key landmark is red flagging on left bank at scouting point.

About 0.8 miles below Sapillo Creek there is an area with lots of strainers which should be scouted on river right. We scouted and ran through narrow passages on a bend to the left. About a mile or so below this on a long straightaway there is a tree across the channel which we snuck by on river right.

Where Water and Wild Cow Canyon come in on river right there is a rapid we called Fence or Cable Rapid as there used to be a fence there at the Redstone/Brock Canyon Allotment boundary. Now only a cable exists. There is an aluminum canoe standing vertically in the trees on the river right. The run used to be on river right down a steep drop next to the cliff but that has become very shallow and rocky. You should scout this one on the river left. At 400 cfs, this reach has five channels. We paddled and/or/lined down the leftmost channel and then lined downstream drop into the main river channel.

Just around the corner from the waterfall coming out of the rock, between Hells Canyon and Utah Bill Canyon, there is a cross-channel strainer. There is a shallow channel on river left that can be paddled/lined. Just around the corner from this area on a right turn there is another cross-channel strainer with a short portage on river left. This portage was runnable at high flows. The approach is a little fast. Just below this strainer there are a pair of root balls with a small channel between. This is tricky and has produced swimmers. Lining may be advisable.

About halfway between Turkey Creek and the Brock Canyon takeout there is a large root ball in the channel, the right side of which we were able to run. This is a nasty place with the water coming off the root ball forcing you into brush on the right, a good place for a flip if you aren't careful. Scout on river right. There is a long portage available on river right.
The best takeout at the camping area at the end of Turkey Creek Rd. is a well-used campsite on river left where the river channel is running north to south(ish) a couple hundred yards above Brock Canyon. There used to be a good takeout immediately above Brock Canyon but that is washed out. The road into Brock has recently been maintained. 4WD and high clearance are still recommended.

The last 7 miles from Brock Canyon down to Mogollon Box, reportedly have quite a bit of wood in it. Reportedly, there are 2 cross-channel obstructions that some have been able to run through and some have portaged. I haven’t been on that reach this year, but it always seems to have a lot of wood in it.

The takeout at Mogollon Box is much more accessible by vehicle although the campground takeout above Brock is actually an easier place to pull boats out and derig.

Due to the 2022 post-Black Fire flood, the riverside vegetation is massively disturbed. There could be new strainers and obstructions at any place along the run. Extreme caution should be exercised on any blind curve.