

## **Arizona Wildlife Federation 2019-20 Year in Review**

6/20/2020

**Summary:** AWF's fiscal year goes July to July, and the last 12 months have been quite a ride! Our year started on the high note of being named NWF's Affiliate of the Year and ended with cancelations of virtually all our normally busy spring activities due to the COVID pandemic. Despite the ups and downs, AWF saw significant progress with some of our long running advocacy campaigns, meaningful expansion of our programs and partnerships with affiliates and businesses, and solid growth in our organizational capabilities.

Politically, Arizona continues to be a state in transition and funders and NGOs see AWF as a credible and effective voice for conservation, particularly because we span the spectrum of "browns and greens" and because of our science based, non-partisan approach to wildlife conservation issues.

With that as our backdrop, there has never been a more important time in our history and we continue to strive toward being the most impactful and respected conservation organization in Arizona.

**Financial Update:** In a year when the stock market saw dramatic swings and the economy was struggling, the AWF balance sheet remains healthy and we have a balanced budget for 2020. AWF is funded primarily by donations from our members and competitive grants that are awarded on an annual basis. Our reputation as a responsible steward and non-partisan, pragmatic and science based voice for conservation in Arizona is undoubtedly the foundation of our financial success.

## **Advocacy Update:**

**Land and Water Conservation Fund;** We are getting very close to realizing a decades long objective of full funding for LWCF! You may recall that after a big win for conservation in 2018 with permanent authorization, the LWCF budget was essentially zeroed out by the administration. AWF and others fought to get it funded at roughly 50% of the full amount and continued to push for full funding. That work is coming together now as the Great America Outdoors Act (GAOA) which includes park infrastructure restoration and full funding of LWCF. GAOA passed the Senate with an overwhelming bi-partisan 75-23 vote just this week and is now headed to the House where we will continue to push for rapid approval without damaging amendments. GAOA creates jobs and benefits the outdoors so should be the kind of “win-win” that even our leaders in DC can get across the finish line!

**Uranium Mining around the Grand Canyon:** Progress here can only be described as two steps forward and one step back. Legislation ensuring permanent protection moved ahead in the house, and more significantly Arizona Senator Kyrsten Sinema introduced similar legislation in the Senate in part due to AWF’s continued advocacy on this issue. On the downside, after almost a year of waiting, the Nuclear Fuels Working Group report was finally made public in March, and as expected calls for opening up the Grand Canyon to mining and suggests establishing a domestic uranium reserve which would put the Grand Canyon squarely in the crosshairs for more mining.

**Climate Change:** On a topic that often elicits emotion and partisan rhetoric, AWF has engaged in the climate discussion using the guiding principles that have served us so well over the last 96 years—making sure our position and efforts are science based and focused on wildlife and habitat. Our role here

has been to primarily educate on the impacts of climate change on wildlife and habitat. We have encouraged common-sense legislation to encourage renewable energy development on public lands, tax incentives for clean energy solutions, and advocated for projects that mitigate the effects of a hotter, drier climate on wildlife in Arizona. At the same time, we have stayed away from partisan positions (and tactics) that are not constructive or are harmful to wildlife and habitat.

**State Legislation & Public Lands:** Once again at this year's state legislature, AWF fought against bills that would establish a foundation for the state to acquire and sell our public lands. The shutdown of the legislature due to COVID was a mixed blessing, putting those bad bills out of their misery but taking with them some promising funding bills that would have put money toward the Arizona Heritage Fund and AZGFD projects like hatchery improvements.

The first ever *Arizona Public Lands Day* (1<sup>st</sup> Saturday in April) was a muted celebration as the COVID pandemic resulted in the cancelation of all group projects. We were still able to collect photos from individuals and small groups doing work or enjoying public lands and look forward to hosting more public events next year. The 2<sup>nd</sup> annual *Camo at the Capitol* was another great success. We had more legislators attend this year including informal addresses by State Legislators Dunn, Osborne, Fann and Pratt. Once again, the highlight of the day was the wild game tasting. Thanks to the Affiliates who joined us, BHA and TU for co-hosting, and to Jesse Deubel from the NMWF for sharing in the event. It is no secret the path to access and influence with our elected leaders is by building relationships and this is a great event for doing just that.

Throughout the year, AWF board, staff and volunteers also continued to engage in discussions with State and Federal agencies regarding important

topics like Waters of the United States (WOTUS), Glen Canyon Dam management and Lee's Ferry Fishery plans, Forest Health and 4 FRI, Outstanding Arizona Waters, and the National Forest planning process.

All of our advocacy work requires the voices of many to be effective and impactful. Thank you to everyone who has written or called their elected representatives, written and submitted LTE's or Op-eds, or simply helped educate their friends and family on these important issues. Every year, true to our mission, AWF works to "educate and inspire" others.

### **Programs Update:**

**BOW:** This past year, our popular Becoming an Outdoors-Woman (BOW) program was attended by over 200 women. Unfortunately, the spring session of BOW had to be canceled due to COVID, but in a demonstration of creativity, our BOW leaders were able to pull off an on-line version over the scheduled weekend that was met with rave reviews! We're looking forward to getting back to in-person events at some point and continue exploring opportunities to expand the program. Big thanks to the BOW team including Kim Kreuzer, Kathy Greene, Linda Dightmon and Nikki Julien.

**Trophy Book:** The next edition of Arizona Trophy Book is in the planning stages and the committee is working toward a November release in time for the holidays.

We are taking pre-orders on the AWF website now! Thanks to the team including Johnathan Odell, Amanda Moors, Mike Golightly, Kim Kreuzer, Mike Matthiesen, and Roger Cook.

**On the Ground Projects:** AWF participated in over a dozen different projects led by AWF affiliates in the past year. These projects benefitted

Arizona wildlife and habitat and ranged from installing and repairing waterers, to fence removal, to riparian restoration. We will continue to grow our volunteer engagement in this area and have now also established an Affiliate grant program to help offset incremental costs to those Affiliates who coordinate these projects. Thanks to AWF part time staffer TJ Lauderback and of course to all the Affiliate leaders and volunteers who make this great work possible.

**Get Outdoors Arizona (GO AZ) business coalition:** In March, AWF kicked off “Get Outdoors Arizona”, an outdoor recreation-oriented business coalition. The goal is to educate business leaders on the issues that impact outdoor recreation in our state and develop them into effective advocates for public lands and responsible management practices. We have got 35 plus businesses signed up already and are hosting monthly meetings with speakers from the Outdoor Industry Association, Arizona State Parks Department, and Arizona Office of Tourism. We have a great website up and running ([getoutdoorsaz.org](http://getoutdoorsaz.org)) and have begun to introduce members to issues like LWCF and uranium mining.

**NWF Program Support:** We continue to partner with the National Wildlife Federation in multiple ways, both by providing input to them on issues and by utilizing their expertise and resources to further our work. We reach out to habitat and pollinator gardeners through the NWF’s *Certified Wildlife Habitat* program, are partners in reaching out to children through NWF’s nationally acclaimed *Ranger Rick* magazines, and we continue to participate in NWF’s *Eco-schools* program.

**Staff and Capacity:** AWF staff has gone through some fairly dramatic changes in the past year, continuing to take on more responsibility and transitioning to management by a full-time staff. By now, most of you have met Nikki Julien, our Education and Outreach Director; Michael Cravens, our Communications Advocacy Coordinator; and TJ

Lauderback, our Volunteer Programs Coordinator. Scott Garlid, who has spent the last 2 years working with AWF as our Conservation Director was chosen by the AWF board to be our new Executive Director. We feel very fortunate to have these professional and highly motivated conservationists working to make AWF even better every day.

On the infrastructure front, AWF converted to a Constituent Resource Management (CRM) system called Wild Apricot, which allows us to manage and track our interactions and communications with members and supporters including everything from advocacy engagements to membership and donation tracking more easily.

We are particularly proud of our quarterly magazine publication, *Arizona Wildlife News*, our monthly *e-News*, and our growing *social media* presence. Our publications continue to get overwhelmingly positive responses from our members, and our social media followers have increased by 30% through the year. We are working hard to meet people through whatever communication medium they prefer. ***Please follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter if you do not already!***

**Thanks and let's do more!!!** AWF board, thank you once again for all for your support and please consider increasing your personal commitment to AWF—whether by lending your voice to our advocacy campaigns or with a financial contribution. A strong and engaged board has been, and will continue to be, fundamental to our success.

In looking back at the amazing progress we've made in the last few years, it's clear to me that there has never been a more exciting time to be part of AWF and I can't wait to see what great things we can accomplish in the coming years!