

Arizona Wildlife News



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What is AWF?

Our Mission Statement

Arizona Wildlife Federation is a non-profit organization dedicated to educating, inspiring, and assisting individuals and organizations to value, conserve, enhance, manage, and protect wildlife and wildlife habitat.

AWF is a statewide association of people interested in the present and future well-being of Arizona's wildlife, wildlife habitat and natural systems. We believe our wildlife heritage should not be jeopardized by any activity that fails to ensure its long-term health and sustainability. From the outset of the organization, AWF's primary goal has been the establishment and maintenance of a Commission/Department form of wildlife administration, free of political influence. We continue to work with the Arizona Game and Fish Department and Commissioners to assure that science-based best practices are used in the management of wildlife and habitat in Arizona.

Our Newsletter

The official publication of the Arizona Wildlife Federation, the State affiliate of the National Wildlife Federation, Arizona Wildlife News (ISSN) is published quarterly as a service to affiliate members and Federation members. The editorials and commentaries in this publication do not necessarily reflect the mission of the Arizona Wildlife Federation. AWF is an equal opportunity provider.

The Arizona Wildlife Federation welcomes stories, art, and photographic contributions! We will consider, but assume no responsibility for unsolicited proposals, manuscripts, art, photographs, and transparencies. Contact the AWF office at (480) 702-1365 for details.

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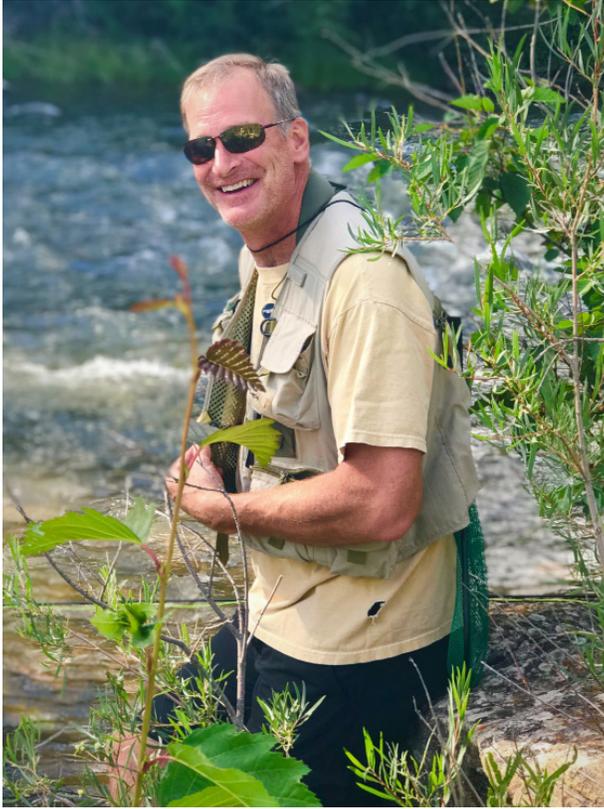
Front Cover Photo Courtesy of Cheryl Reuss. Articles by: Scott Garlid, Amber Munig, Lew Carpenter, Nikki Julien, Trica Oshant Hawkins, Verenice Martinez, and Hala Benmoussa.

JOIN THE CONVERSATION



A Message from the Executive Director

By Scott Garlid, AWF Executive Director



It's Who We Are

Sound science. Best governance. You can't get 5 minutes into a conversation with Arizona Wildlife Federation (AWF) board vice-president Glen Dickens without him sticking his two index fingers into the air to represent the goalposts of sound science and best governance, and explaining how everything we do must fall between those boundaries.

Those goalposts are what AWF was founded on almost 100 years ago, when we were formed to take the politics out of game management in Arizona. And it's who we are today. Our advocacy work in particular adheres strictly to those guidelines, and it's the foundation of every discussion we have with agencies and other organizations about wildlife and habitat management.

In this issue of Arizona Wildlife News, you'll get an inside look at the data-driven biology and detailed process that the Arizona Game and Fish Department uses to establish Arizona's hunt guidelines (p. 12). As usual, our Regional Reports (p. 4) reflect our values of sound science and best governance, and report on the status of important policies like management of the Heber wild horses, the Mexican gray wolf introduction, the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest travel management plan, and more.

But sound science and best governance is meaningless if people don't have a love for the outdoors and a connection to nature. And that's ALSO who we are. We share our love of the outdoors and we connect people with outdoor places through our programs and with our affiliates.

Very few organizations do a better job of bringing the entire community together and connecting them with the outdoors than Friends of the Verde River, the focus of this month's Affiliate Spotlight (p. 10). And when AWF volunteers work together to roll up barbed wire (p. 20), we sprinkle in some education about pronghorn, their habitat, and the importance of wildlife connectivity. Nine miles of fence may seem like a lot, but it's nothing compared to the lifelong connection we're creating between the volunteers and Arizona's outdoors.

If you're like me and believe the most important thing we do may be connecting people to the outdoors, our exciting new Bridges to BOW (B2B) program is a "must read" (p. 15). B2B introduces younger and more diverse women to the outdoors, and the testimonies of recent attendees Verence and Hala (p. 17) speak volumes to the success and promise of this innovative new program.

Sound science, best governance...and connecting people to the outdoors. It's who we are.

Yours in conservation,

Scott Garlid, Executive Director, Arizona Wildlife Federation

AWF Regional Roundup

Arizona Wildlife Federation divides the state into regions in the same manner as the Arizona Game and Fish Department. This map depicts each of those regions and the members of our Board of Directors who serve as directors for each area. Our Regional Directors are busy!



Bob Vahle
Region 1 Director



Travis Woolley
Region 2 Director



Loyd Barnett
Region 3 Director



Pat Headington
Region 4 Director



Duane Aubuchon
Region 5 Director



Amanda Moors
Region 6 Director

Region 1 Director's Report

By Bob Vahle, Regional Director

The following update is focused on three key land management issues that affect many terrestrial and aquatic wildlife species populations and thousands of acres of wildlife and fish habitats in Region 1 on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest (ASNF). These have been long planned projects that have been highlighted in detail in previous Region I Director's reports and continue to be of primary concern and focus for the AWF as they relate to our mission.

Four Forests Restoration Initiative (4FRI) Update

The original goal of the 4FRI project which was initiated in 2010 was to use forest restoration treatments on 2.4 million acres areas of the ASNF, Coconino NF, Kaibab NF and the Tonto NF to improve forest and watershed health, reduce the risk and occurrence of large uncontrolled landscape wildfires and restore natural fire ecology, improve wildlife/fish habitats, and many other objectives including supporting a viable timber industry and jobs in the local communities. The goal was to use mechanical thinning to treat 1 million acres over a 20 year period of time along with the use of prescribed fire treatments to accomplish these objectives. Unfortunately, the 4FRI project annual treatment acreage goals have not been attainable as planned due to a number of factors. These factors in particular include the lack of a critical forest industry infrastructure (e.g., logging companies capable of mechanically thinning, hauling, and removing large volumes of harvested trees and thinning residue biomass and sawmills and biomass treatment facilities) needed to treat and process the large volume of forest materials removed over the thousands of acres of planned forest thinning treatments. In addition, there is still a lack of markets and marketable products and uses that have been developed from the thinning of small diameter trees and forest thinning residue which is needed to develop, build, and sustain forest product companies in the local communities.

As a result of the many large scale destructive wildfires that have occurred in recent years across the West (including Arizona), and the inability of the 4FRI project to rapidly accomplish the very large number of thinning acres originally planned, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), U.S. Forest Service (USFS) has developed a new 4FRI Restoration Strategy Implementation Update for the 4FRI project. Starting in Fiscal Year 2022, the USFS has approved \$54 million per year for 5 years for the 4FRI project to mechan-

ically thin, remove hazardous ground fuels, and use prescribed fire in areas of highest wildfire risk to communities and critical watersheds in the 4FRI project area. In Region I (within the ASNF along the Mogollon Rim and the White Mountains) this would include treatment areas around Forest Lakes, Heber-Overgaard, Show Low, Pinetop-Lakeside, Greer, Springerville, and Alpine. The acreage to be treated on the ASNF in 2022 includes 14,388 acres of mechanical thinning, 11,500 acres of hazardous fuel reduction, and 43,881 acres of prescribed fire to reduce wildfire risk. The Final Decision on the 4FRI "Rim Country Project" is scheduled to be completed in May of 2022 and implemented starting June 2022.

Heber Wild Horse Territory Management Plan & Control of Feral Horses on the ASNF

The management issue and public concern over the increasing feral horse population on the ASNF and the need for the completion and implementation of a management plan for the federally protected "wild" horses that are known to utilize the designated 19,000 acre "Heber Wild Horse Territory" (HWHT) under "The Wild-Free Roaming Horse and Burro Act" of 1971 (Public Law 92-195) on the Black Mesa Ranger District continues to grow. Unfortunately, over 30 horses have been illegally killed on the ASNF in recent years. USFS law enforcement personnel and the Navajo County Sheriff's Office continue to investigate the killings but to date, no arrests have been made. The USFS is now offering a \$10,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the individual(s) responsible for these killings.

As previously reported, the AWF was fully involved as a stakeholder in the "Heber Wild Horse Territory Working Group," which first met in 2017 to provide potential management recommendations to the ASNF for development of a HWHT Management Plan. The AWF provided comments on the March 2021 ASNF – HWHT Draft Management Plan which are documented in the Plan and cited below:

"Our analysis has identified that 104 horses is the upper limit of horses which results in a thriving natural ecological balance and avoids deterioration of the range. Thus, any exceedance of that number has the potential to disrupt that balance and lead to deterioration of the range. In 2017, the most recent census flight, the estimated horse population was 270 to 420. The annual growth rate for the herd is estimated to be about twenty percent. At this rate, the estimated population could be nearly ten times higher than the proposed upper limit by 2022.

Population management actions are needed to maintain a healthy horse herd while also maintaining a thriving natural ecological balance. Without management, the wild horse population would continue to grow unchecked with potential adverse impacts to the population and its surrounding habitat."

The AWF hopes that the timeline goals to complete and implement the "HWHT Management Plan" as described in the ASNF – "Schedule for Proposed Action" are fully met and not further delayed.

ASNF Public Motorized Travel Management Plan

The final public comment period for the ASNF – August 2019 – Public Motorized Travel Management Plan: Revised Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) ended on October 29, 2019. At that time, AWF provided extensive comments on the proposed management plan and DEIS analysis. To date, the ASNF has not completed this critically needed plan which needs to be implemented in light of the significant increase in the sales and use of Off Highway Vehicles (OHV) over many areas of the ASNF. The implementation and enforcement of regulations that have been included in the travel management plan are needed to reduce the adverse impacts of unregulated OHV use that is currently increasing over many areas on the ASNF (i.e., creating many new unauthorized "wildcat roads and trails"; damaging key wildlife habitats such as springs, wet meadows, stream banks, and earthen water tanks; and disturbing and displacing wildlife from key foraging and bedding areas).

The ASNF currently anticipates completing the final decision on the ASNF Public Motorized Travel Management Plan in July 2022 and implementing the plan in August 2022. The AWF hopes that these timelines are met without any further delays in implementing this critically needed management plan.



Heber horses mare and colt. Photo courtesy of L. Singleton, --The White Mountain Independent

Region 2 Director's Report

By Travis Woolley, Regional Director

Wildfire Crisis Strategy Released

The U.S. Forest Service recently announced a new strategy to confront the Wildfire Crisis in the Western U.S. that relies on working with partners to strategically place treatments based on newly developed science. The science and strategy focuses on key “firesheds” (large forested landscapes and rangelands) that have the highest likelihood of exposing communities and infrastructure to wildfire. This strategic framework will be used to treat up to 20 million acres of Federal Lands and an additional 30 million of state, private, and tribal lands over the next 10 years across the western U.S., and create plans for long term maintenance of those restoration treatments. As our local forests await the funds for this strategy, the Regional office in the Southwest has kicked off Stakeholder roundtables to bring partners in to better understand how this strategy and funding needs to be implemented.

Four Forest Restoration Initiative Prioritization Effort

In conjunction with the Wildfire Crisis strategy, the USFS has engaged Stakeholders from the Four Forest Restoration Initiative (4FRI) in partnership to develop a prioritization effort to better determine how forest restoration activities will be planned and implemented across the 4FRI footprint. Stakeholders, including conservation and environmental organizations, local governments, utilities, and industry, and others will be convening over the next several months to determine the process and science that will define and assist the strategic placement of restoration treatments within 4FRI.

Additional Funding Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)

In addition to funding for forest restoration efforts such as 4FRI, infrastructure funding will be directed to sediment reduction projects for the Museum Fire to help protect neighborhoods in Flagstaff, as well providing funding towards the Flagstaff Watershed Protection Project and the C.C. Cragin watershed project. Senator Mark Kelly has also advocated to the US Forest Service that IIJA funding should go to major improvements to Snowbowl Road on the San Francisco Peaks and repairs to boat ramp damages and shortages at the Glen Canyon National recreation Area (GCNRA). Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks indicated that a \$31 million grant will be given to the GCNRA to begin to do work to alleviate these issues.

Mexican Gray Wolf Returns, Public Comments Taken on Revised Management Plan

The Mexican gray wolf who had previously traveled from western New Mexico to the Flagstaff area last summer and was relocated by wildlife officials, returned to the same area in January and was shot and killed in the Kaibab National Forest. The death is currently under investigation, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is offering a \$10,000 reward for information regarding the wolf's death. The killing of the wolf is considered a violation of the Endangered Species Act and can result in penalties of up to \$50,000,

and/or up to one year in jail, plus a potential civil fine of up to \$25,000.



Mexican Gray Wolf. Photo by George Andrejko

Amidst the spark in controversy over the killing of the gray wolf, the FWS received 47,000 comments on their proposal for a revised management plan. The main tenets of a revised plan include removing the population cap of 300-325 wolves, adding a genetic diversity objective (22 released wolves surviving to breeding age by 2030), and temporarily restricting three allowable methods of take until genetic diversity goals are met. The AWF has submitted comments previously concurring with FWS not to include habitat north of I40 in recovery efforts, as well as keeping the current population cap and diversity objectives.



2020 Records of Arizona Big Game

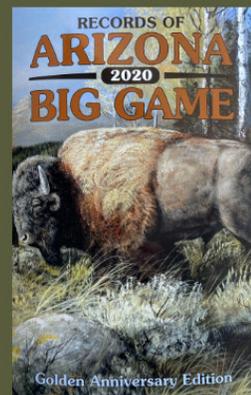
Records of Arizona Big Game is the oldest and longest running record book published by any individual state.

2020 is the Golden Anniversary edition, marking the 50th anniversary since it began.

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- 12 incredible Arizona hunting stories
- Tributes to remarkable Arizona conservationists
- 3,484 records of exceptional animals
- Full color field photos of some of the biggest animals

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Region 3 Director's Report

By Loyd Barnett, Regional Director

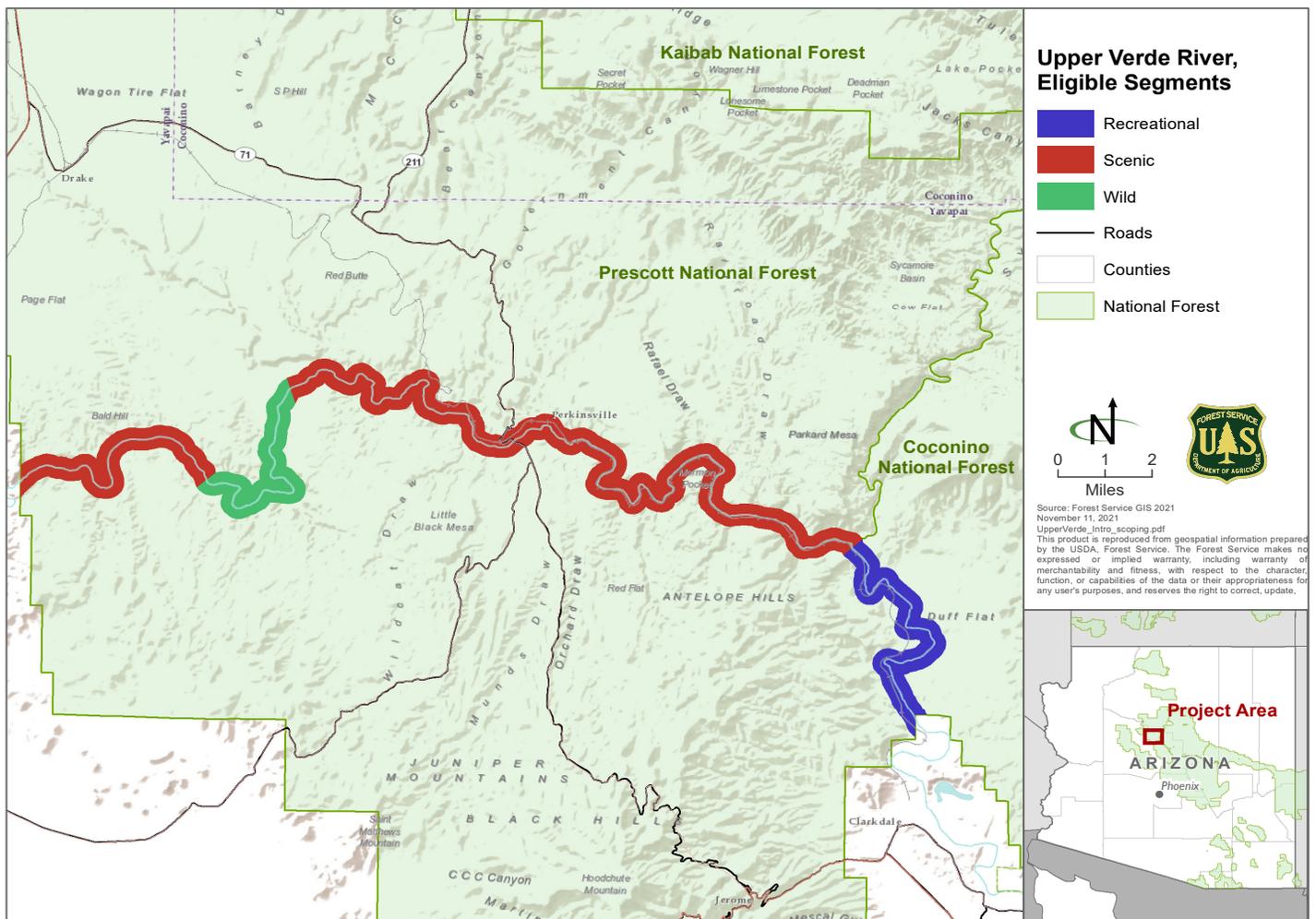
Verde River

The Prescott National Forest is initiating a wild and scenic river (WSR) suitability study for 37 miles of the Upper Verde River in the Prescott and Coconino National Forests already determined eligible for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System (NWSRS). This is the portion upstream from Cottonwood.

The timing of the WSR suitability study is due to a proposal from the Bureau of Reclamation to construct two fish barriers within segments of the river already established as eligible for inclusion in the NWSRS. As reported in June 2020, the two fish barriers are proposed as mitigation for Central Arizona Project impacts and are aimed at helping manage for native fisheries. U.S. Forest Service (USFS) policy requires a WSR suitability study to be conducted if a proposed project has the potential to impact the river's free-flowing condition or outstandingly remarkable values that make it eligible for inclusion in the NWSRS. It has been determined that the proposed fish barriers do have the potential to impact eligibility of the river segments; hence, the USFS must conduct the suitability study.

Suitability studies are used as a basis for decisions to recommend waterways (or not) to Congress for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System. Previous studies determined that the area is eligible – meets the legal requirements – for inclusion, with the majority being eligible for scenic designation, and smaller portions eligible as wild and as recreational (see map).

Rivers classified as Wild are those that are free of impoundments and generally inaccessible except by trail, their watercourses or shorelines are essentially primitive, and their waters are not polluted. Such rivers represent vestiges of primitive America. Rivers classified as Scenic are those that are free of impoundments, with shorelines or watercourses still largely primitive and undeveloped but accessible in places by roads. Rivers classified as Recreational are those that are readily accessible by road or railroad, that may have some development along their shorelines, and that may have undergone some impoundment or diversion in the past. Scoping and preparation of a Draft Environmental Assessment are scheduled for this spring and summer.



Eligible sections of the Upper Verde for the Wild and Scenic River designation.

Invasive Plant Removal

The Verde Watershed Restoration Coalition (VWRC), the primary component of the Restoring Habitat program of the Friends of the Verde River, continued their multi-year program of removing invasive plants from the Verde River and its tributaries. This past season's program used two crews and much of the work focused on tributaries.

Arundo (giant reed) is a major focus along Oak Creek where it has colonized major reaches. Arundo will continue to be a focal plant in the next season. Crews also worked along West Clear Creek near its confluence with the Verde and again this season in parts of Fossil Creek not impacted by the Backbone Fire. In Fossil Creek, one of the primary invasive plants is Himalayan blackberry. This season the Siberian elm was added to the group of invasives being treated, though it is much more limited in distribution.



Arizona Conservation Corp crews treating giant reed (*Arundo donax*) along the Verde River. Photo courtesy of Friends of the Verde River.

Monitoring has become a significant part of the program, with a three-year rotation established to determine success of past treatment, retreatment needs, and new areas needing treatment. A new source of funding this season was the Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management. Their grant program for invasive plant management funded some removal on private lands within the Camp Verde area.



Photo by Cheryl Reuss.

Burros

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has removed 1,000 burros from the Black Mountain Habitat Management Area (BMHMA) since September 2020 following a decision issued in August 2020. At the time of the decision the estimated population of burros within the BMHMA was over 2,200 which is more than four times the appropriate management level (AML) of 478. The decision called for removing 1,000 burros, followed by an aerial survey to determine the remaining number of animals to remove to reach the AML. The BLM will also use fertility control vaccine treatments and adjust sex ratios to reduce population growth in order to achieve and maintain the AML.

In fiscal year 2022 (Oct. 2021 – Sep. 2022) the only scheduled removal is 80 nuisance burros impacting private land adjacent to the BHMHA. That began in mid-February and was completed at the end of April.

AWF Affiliate Spotlight:

Friends of the Verde River Create a Collaborative Community

By Nikki Julien

“Friends,” as the conservation non-profit Friends of Verde River is affectionately referred to, is guided by their mission of working collaboratively for a healthy Verde River. As one of the precious few river systems in Arizona, the Verde Watershed, with tributaries spanning the greater portion of central Arizona from the Mogollon Rim to the Phoenix area, provides water to wildlife and us humans alike. Sustaining a well-flowing river amid myriad human uses and needs - like rapid development, drought, climate change, and invasive species - takes more than one non-profit. Friends works with a coalition of partners to help keep the Verde flowing, bringing together residents of Verde River communities, landowners and land managers, conservation non-profits such as Arizona Wildlife Federation, and state and federal agencies such as the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, Arizona Game and Fish Department, and the US Forest Service.



2021 monitoring crew members identifying vegetation at a project site.

Program Director, Tracy Stephens, oversees Friends’ efforts to maintain a healthy Verde River system through programs to sustain flows and restore habitat. The organization works to address a multitude of issues, like curtailing unmanaged groundwater pumping through voluntary programs like the Verde River Exchange and promoting sustainable development through the new River Friendly Living program. Restoring habitat takes many hands. Residents often get involved in the straightforward removal of invasive species and picking up litter, but there is more to it to keep the river flowing for years to come. Working with partner organizations and community scientists, who are volunteers from within our local communities, Friends oversees activities like monitoring the spread of invasive species, removing invasive species and re-planting

with native ones, tracking populations of plants and animals, measuring pollution levels through Water Quality Monitoring, and building erosion-control structures. These programs and others provide data on river flows, biodiversity, threats, and opportunities. Farmers, ranchers, homeowners, businesses, and government agencies are then more informed, and can better collaborate on long-term goals for all interests, even amid the rapid development in the Verde River communities.

While many of AWF’s affiliate organizations are critter groups who advocate for a specific game species, Friends is a champion for the water that supports these species... and more. Friends’ staff and board have a wealth of expertise and experience in science-based habitat management. With a strong background in biology and fisheries, Stephens recently joined the board of AWF and sees the mutual commitment to science-based management as a key crossover which has forged a partnership between the two organizations in several projects. Loyd Barnett, AWF board member, joined Friends’ efforts on wildlife corridors (see the Region 3 Director’s Report on page 8). Additionally, Friends’ River Friendly Living initiative, a voluntary certification program that helps residents and businesses to showcase their sustainable practices, includes the National Wildlife Federation’s Certified Wildlife Habitat as part of their program. The NWF program’s apex level certifies whole communities, and maybe with Friends’

Affiliate Spotlight: FVR, Cont'd.

collaborative efforts, the entire Verde watershed could one day be certified as yet another example of what so many of us agree on—that habitat is worth working together for.

To learn more about Friends of the Verde River, visit their website at www.verderiver.org

Arizona Wildlife Federation is proud to affiliate with Friends of the Verde and several other conservation non-profits. As affiliates of AWF, organizations may have a board or staff member join the AWF Board of Directors. This provides for a diversity of voices on AWF board, with each affiliate organization providing a unique perspective and focus on conservation in Arizona. Working together, the AWF board members have a broader and more balanced picture of the issues and possible solutions for Arizona wildlife. To learn more about becoming an affiliate, visit our affiliate page at <https://azwildlife.org/affiliates> or contact awf@azwildlife.org.



Community Scientists collecting water quality samples at one of our Oak Creek project sites.



View of the beautiful Verde River near Childs in autumn. All photos courtesy of FVR.

Seasons Change... Hunting Seasons, That Is.

The Arizona Hunt Guidelines Process

By Amber Munig, Big Game Management Program Supervisor,
Arizona Game and Fish Department



“Why did you decrease permits?”
“You need to increase permits!”
“Offer more youth hunts, CHAMP hunts, archery hunts.” “You have too many hunts in my unit!” “Close the season.” “Make it simpler!” “I should be able to hunt every year.” “It’s too crowded.” “You have no data.” “Whose dumb idea was it to change that?” “Bring back the fruit-salad hunting opportunity.”

You name the complaint and we have heard it. Every year in which the Arizona Game and Fish Department makes a change to a process that affects a substantial number of constituents, the change takes someone by surprise. That surprise is often expressed in a phone call, email, or letter to the Department and Arizona Game and Fish Commission. The customer expressing surprise at the change is generally equally surprised that many of the changes we implement are ideas that originate from the public, and in practice are not nearly as underhanded or nefarious as the customer originally believes. Believe it or not, the basis for all hunt opportunity in Arizona is data driven and based on the biology of each species.

Hunting and the hunt development or recommendation process in Arizona are governed by three tiers of regulations. The first tier of regulations comprise statutes, which include the state laws regarding the Commission (e.g., the wildlife that are classified as big game are defined in statute). Occasionally, federal law such as the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, plays a role. Secondly, Commission rules define how statutes are implemented and provide

details of processes for implementation (e.g., types or hunting seasons and the draw process are defined in rule). Finally, Commission orders annually set seasons, season dates, bag limits, permit numbers, and open areas, and these are published in the annual hunting regulations. Each tier has its own public input phase. Commission orders may not supersede rules, nor rules supersede statutes.

The hunt guidelines were designed to be used by Department wildlife biologists when developing hunt recommendations. What's the difference, you ask? The hunt guidelines are intended to provide general guidance or the framework under which hunted or trapped species are managed, and are approved for a five-year period. The hunt guidelines manage for sustainable populations and allow for hunting within the biological limits of the particular species. They have been developed to meet a variety of hunting desires and strive to provide adequate opportunity for all. Arizona's hunt guidelines recently approved by the Commission are based on the best available biological and social science and went through a rigorous public review. They will guide development of hunt recommendations for the next five years.

Hunt recommendations (aka Commission orders and ultimately the hunt regulations) are developed using the framework put in place by the hunt guidelines. They consider population change, change in hunter harvest and participation, and potential impacts of environmental changes. The hunt recommendations are approved by the Commission during public meetings. In April, the Commission addresses deer, javelina, bighorn sheep, bison, bear, mountain lion, small game, migratory birds, and trapping seasons. In December, the Commission considers pronghorn, elk, turkey, and population management seasons. Public comment at any of these meetings may result in changes to season structures under consideration.

However, the hunt recommendation process begins much earlier than the actual meeting in which the Commission approves the hunt recommendations, or even the meeting at which they approve the hunt guidelines. The process is designed to gather a great deal of public input.

Anytime (but especially leading up to the review of the hunt guidelines) agency biologists and wildlife managers

may submit recommended amendments to the existing guidelines. Wildlife managers spend much of their time either surveying wildlife or patrolling hunts. While in the field, they observe conflicts among users, successful strategies, and speak to countless hunters who successfully drew permits to hunt. At other times, they personnel speak with hundreds of other would-be hunters that were not successful in the draw. They often share their ideas on how more people might gain the opportunity to hunt. This public input, often widely disparate in nature, is combined in an effort to recommend changes that will yield desirable hunt structures, yet provide the maximum opportunity to hunters.

Recommended changes to the type and timing of hunts are based on field experience and interactions with the public regarding season structures that are working well or those that could benefit from changes. Suggested changes are evaluated by the regional game management personnel and forwarded to the Big and Small Game Program personnel in Phoenix. The Game Program then meets with regional staff to discuss the suggested changes. A team representing a cross section of the agency involved in hunt recommendations is convened every five years to discuss changes to the hunt guidelines that might enhance hunter opportunity and ensure that the hunt structures continue to fall within the biological limits for each species.

Again, public outreach and input is critical. We've tried opinion surveys, public meetings around the state, webinars, webcasts, newsletters and email, and social media. We've set up tables in front of places hunters like to shop. Getting public engagement is



Hunting Seasons, Cont'd.

hard but we keep at it. Our goal is to get your opinion on many aspects of hunting and hunting opportunity. We consider these opinions in relation to the biological limits of each species and in relation to other public opinions. Does it mean your suggestion or opinion will be adopted? Not necessarily. There are a lot of opinions that need to be balanced, and some suggestions are restricted due to statutes and Commission rules already in place.

We just wrapped up the hunt guidelines review with the Commission approving them on April 1 for the next five years (well, six since we started the review early and applied the guidelines to the remainder of the fall 2022 and spring 2023 hunts). This hunt guidelines review began in August 2021 soliciting comments on the existing hunt guidelines, a couple of webcasts were held in October, and proposed changes were presented to the Commission for additional feedback in December. January 1, 2022 started a 30-day formal public comment period; a summary of comments was presented to the Commission in February, and on April 1, 2022, the Commission considered and approved the final proposed hunt guidelines through the fall 2027 and spring 2028 hunting seasons. News releases and social media notices were distributed throughout this process.

Hunt guidelines are only one piece of an overall planning approach used by the Commission and Department in managing wildlife. While hunt guidelines describe what the Department manages toward, species management guidelines or plans are protocols that describe how that data is collected and may describe landscape level objectives, opportunities for habitat enhancement, specific herd management objectives (e.g., increase population), and management challenges (e.g., persistent low fawn recruitment for pronghorn, habitat fragmentation, disease concerns).

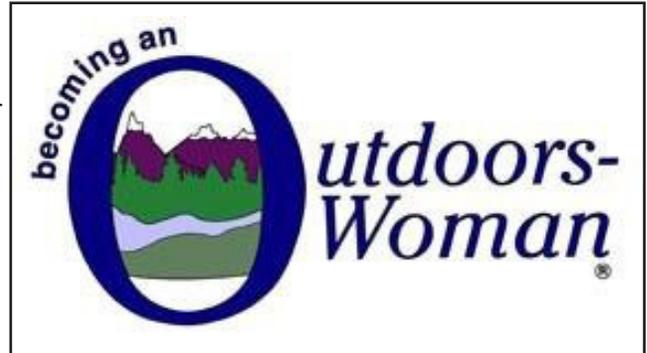
Ultimately, the Department manages wildlife in the public trust for all of Arizona. All game animals, from predators to small game to big game, are managed as part of an important ecosystem to be sustained for future generations of Arizonans to enjoy. Arizona has a diverse wildlife resource, yet many of these resources are limited in supply. The hunt guidelines attempt to provide the diversity of experiences desired by the hunters of Arizona, while providing the necessary management so that all Arizonans will benefit from diverse wildlife populations in the future.



Bridges to BOW Successfully Increases Diversity And Inclusion in BOW

By Trica Oshant Hawkins, Verenice Martinez, and Hala Benmoussa

AWF launched Bridges to BOW (B2B) last fall by partnering with Public Allies Arizona to recruit 15 pioneering young women from a wide diversity of backgrounds to attend the September BOW at Friendly Pines Camp in Prescott. This spring, we again expanded our reach to spread the word about BOW (with the help of Public Allies) and introduced another cohort of young, diverse, underrepresented women to BOW. Some of these women had heard about BOW from their friends who participated in B2B last fall. Some heard through Social Media, saw strategically posted flyers, or visited the booth tabled by Public Allies at events such as “First Fridays” in Phoenix. However they heard about B2B, it brought them to BOW. And that is the goal of Bridges to BOW: to increase diversity and be more inclusive at our BOW workshops, and ultimately to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion in Arizona’s great outdoors. And it is working! We are getting word out about this wonderful, outdoor opportunity and seeing new faces, both at BOW and on trails and at campsites around the state.



Spring 2022



The Spring 2022 B2B group, some of whom had returned to BOW to welcome in and mentor the next cohort.

Bridges to BOW, Cont'd.

Many of the B2B women who participated in BOW last fall continue to use their new-found skills and love of nature and are regularly getting outside to hike, camp, fish, and explore. Two B2B ladies from the fall to attend this spring's BOW workshop saying that they would not have done so without B2B and the bridge it provided them to learn about and experience BOW. Almost all B2B participants say they, too, plan on attending BOW again in the future, but they never would have known about it or had the confidence to attend without B2B.

The Bridges to BOW program is clearly an avenue for not only reaching underrepresented women, but (given the past successes of BOW), giving them the information, skills, and confidence they need to become active and engaged sportswomen. BOW becomes their door to participating in fishing, hunting, and outdoor activities, and Bridges to BOW gets them to BOW.

It is well known that upon gaining an awareness and understanding of the natural world, the natural progression of an individual is toward stewardship and conservation. B2B expands this awareness and understanding to a formerly underserved segment of



B2B participant and Public Ally, Jennifer Gonzales, learns how to identify wildlife sign from long time BOW instructor, Tice Supplee.



Nikole, Candace, DaMeré, Pita, and ChaValiér (photographer) take up hiking and camping together after BOW.

young women who will become (or already are) voters, mothers, and potentially, leaders of our communities. Through B2B and BOW, they now understand the need for wildlife conservation and they will no doubt share this understanding and appreciation with their families, friends, and communities (even beyond what is requested of them for attendance). They will go into their futures armed with a positive outdoor ethic and a new appreciation of Arizona's outdoor opportunities. Bridges to BOW helps get them there.



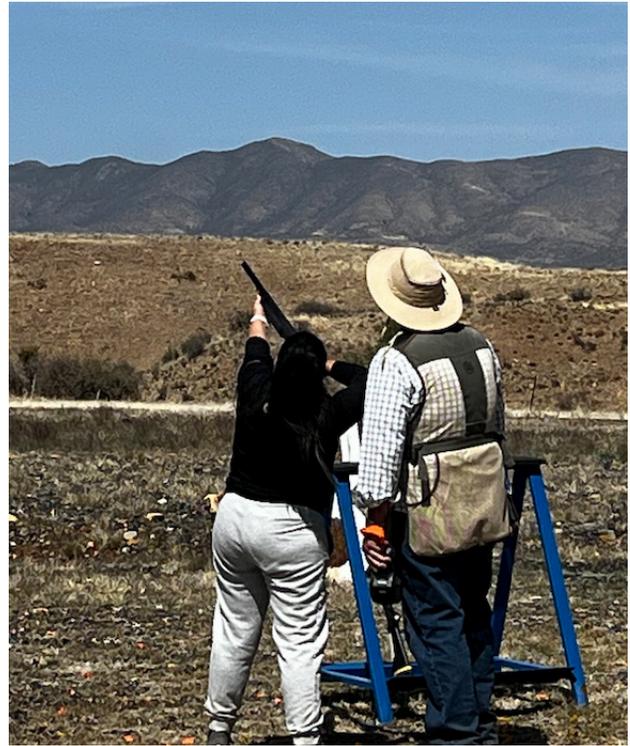
With new gear, skills, and confidence, ChaValiér and Candace go camping on their own for the first time.

Don't just take our word for it... Read what a few Bridges to BOW participants have to say:

"When I first heard about BOW I was not very sure if it was something I would be able to do. My friend, who attended BOW through Bridges to BOW (B2B) last year, insisted I should check it out because the experience was unforgettable. I work full time and am a student as well so I do not have the extra income at this point in time to be able to participate in BOW. My friend mentioned that she'd heard about, and attended BOW through AWF's Bridges to BOW program. I cannot express how thankful I am to my friend for telling me about B2B."

Through B2B, I met the most amazing group of girls and shared the wonderful experiences of BOW with them. I learned about hiking and backpacking, gun safety, how to shoot a shotgun, and even learned how to prepare foods for dehydration. All of my classes were taught by women and it was one of the most empowering experiences ever. Bridges to BOW allowed me to share this adventure with young, strong, and diverse women who also taught me so much in such short amount of time. Learning about how to care for, love, and appreciate our wildlife just made me want to go out and explore and put all the things I learned at camp to use and create memories with my husband, friends, and family. I want to show them how beautiful it is to take a break from life and enjoy the things we sometimes take for granted. I cannot wait to see Bridges to BOW grow and open the doors to more young women who may not be able to take a break from life and experience such a memorable, life changing weekend."

-- Verenice Martinez, B2B Participant



Verenice was a crack shot with the shotgun!

"Bridges to BOW was such an empowering experience! What really made an impact on me was that I got to witness the connections, the confidence, and the comradery built between the members of our cohort."

-- Molly McIntyre, Public Ally and B2B Participant

"Bridges to BOW has been an impactful program that has helped me find myself and my interests. I had the wonderful opportunity to participate in activities that I otherwise would have not found. My favorite newly learned skill was rappelling, which I did not expect."

It was a pleasure being surrounded by young women that are also motivated to dive deeper into themselves and find their interests in the outdoors. It is empowering being around women of all different backgrounds and sharing our stories and experiences. It is seldom in life you can be surrounded by only women and I cherish each moment of those experiences."

B2B is truly pioneering the future of how we interact and learn about nature!"

-- Hala Benmoussa, B2B Participant



Hala gets ready to rappel, her favorite new outdoor activity!

Arizona: The Missing Hunt Regulation

By Lew Carpenter,

Director of Conservation Partnerships for the National Wildlife Federation Rocky Mountain Region



As hunters put in for big game tags in Arizona and begin thinking about plans this fall there is one aching gap in Arizona Game and Fish regulations that needs to be addressed – the ability for hunters to access game recovery dogs to find wounded game.

Forty three states allow tracking dogs as a reliable conservation component to reduce waste of big game species. In the vast majority of states the dog is required to be on a lead and in constant control by the handler. Most inveterate hunters have experienced the loss of a wounded animal at some point in their history. Those that haven't are both lucky and, likely, take close approach shots with a rifle or the pull of their bow. But we all know the advances in optics, ammo and archery equipment provide opportunities for longer take downs – and also the opportunity to critically wound an animal that still has enough juice left to evade harvest.

Lew Carpenter (left). The author's tracking teckel (wirehaired dachshund) Bartok Hugo Ahornzwinger (below). Photo by Matt Vincent.



AZ's Missing Regulation, Cont'd.



Game recovery dogs can solve many of these lost target issues during what becomes a stressful and emotional moment for hunters. The results can be amazing and salvage what may be the trophy elk, mule deer, Coues deer or bear of a lifetime (and one that possibly cost decades of bonus points to garner).

“A strong case can be made for the use of tracking dogs, both as a means of reducing animal suffering, and as a way of reducing the waste of a valuable natural resource,” says John Jeanneney in his landmark book *Tracking Dogs for Finding Wounded Deer*. “There are political and social implications involved that cannot be disregarded.”

Efforts by United Blood Trackers of America, which has a searchable database of tracker contact info and resources

on tracking and recovering big game, has transformed the conservation landscape by working to get state game and fish regulations in line with contemporary conservation concepts. In the West, too, there are social media landing spots like Rocky Mountain Big Game Recovery on Facebook that can guide hunters to being prepared for hunting season and lessons about arrow or rifle impact zones and what that means for recovering wounded game. In many cases, recovery dogs can be used at little to no cost compared to the financial outlay of the overall hunt itself.

“Tracking is a serious business. It is about recovering a wounded animal that might be still alive, in great distress and pain,” according to Steven McGonigal and Julia Szeremeta in their book *The International Working Teckel*. “It all starts with the hit spot and a description from the hunter what has happened – an experienced tracker is like a detective, putting all the information together to determine whether and when to start tracking. Depending on the shot placement, the wounded animal needs time to expire.”



Hopefully, the Arizona Game and Fish agency can address this gap in hunting regulations and in the future consider allowing the use of tracking dogs (on a 30-foot lead) for recovering wounded game. Hunters will be grateful, and the resource will be more healthy and cared for as a result. For more information go to www.united-bloodtrackers.org or visit the Facebook site for Rocky Mountain Big Game Recovery to chat with trackers throughout the region.

Joe Bradley and a recovered mule deer that was partially consumed by a bear. (top). Scott Gillespie and Lucy (dachshund) on a recovered black bear (right). Tracker Scott Gillespie, Lucy (dachshund) and recovered elk (left).



A Busy and Productive Spring for AWF's Volunteers for Wildlife

By Trica Oshant Hawkins

It was a busy spring for our Volunteers for Wildlife as we completed five different projects in central and southern Arizona. The primary focus of our spring projects has been the continued removal of barbed wire fencing from the landscape. Removal of these abandoned stretches of barbed wire restores important wildlife corridors and aides wildlife movement. Land managers estimate that there are hundreds of miles of abandoned barbed wire fencing throughout the west. These fences impede wildlife movement and entangle animals. Our work to remove this wildlife hazard results in an immediate improvement to the landscape.



Volunteers with Ernst and Young removed one mile of old barbed wire.



Kristin Brown, AWF Volunteer for Wildlife, prepares to hand roll barbed wire.

One of our fence removal projects included partnering with a coalition of agencies and conservation groups in southern Arizona including the Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection, Friends of Ironwood Forest, Friends of the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge, Arizona Game and Fish Department, Saguaro National Park, Mule Deer Foundation, and the Tucson Audubon Society. The goal of the project was to remove barbed wire fencing from an area known to be a critical wildlife linkage connecting Tucson Mountain Park, Saguaro National Park, Ironwood Forest National Monument, and the Tohono O'odham Nation. After 3 full days of work, a total of 7 miles of barbed wire, weighing in at 2 tons, was removed from the area!

Volunteers for Wildlife, Cont'd.



In other projects, our Volunteers for Wildlife removed an additional 2 miles of fencing from the Sonoran Desert National Monument, for a total of 9 miles of barbed wire removed from the landscape this past season. Some of the fencing removed was from the Table Top Wilderness Area. It took a hearty crew of volunteers to hike in to the project site, cut and hand roll the wire, and carry it out of the wilderness area. We plan to organize more fence removal projects in this area once the weather cools off, and more volunteers are always welcome!

In all, volunteers contributed 204 hours of their time to help wildlife through these efforts. While we have over 300 people signed up as Volunteers for Wildlife, most of our projects tend to have anywhere from 5 to 20 people involved. We are currently completing around 10 projects each year.

Volunteers from Ernst and Young remove barbed wire fencing.

If you would like to get outside for a day of hard work and fresh air while also helping wildlife and meeting like-minded people, consider signing up as a Volunteer for Wildlife. You can do this on our website at www.azwildlife.org/volunteer.



Volunteers remove fencing from a pronghorn holding pen.

Can we count on your help?

Visit www.azwildlife.org or call 480-702-1365 to give to AWF.



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RENEW YOUR SUPPORT

If you have supported AWF in the past, thank you! Please continue your commitment to conservation by renewing your support with an annual (or monthly!) contribution.



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DONATE STOCKS

Share your investment wealth through the donation of stocks by contacting Board Treasurer Amanda Moors at amoores@cableone.net



LEAVE A LEGACY

By including AWF in your estate planning, you give the gift of long-term conservation.



CERTIFY YOUR GARDEN

Give the gift of habitat to wildlife and when you certify with the National Wildlife Federation, AWF will receive a portion of your certification charge.



GIVE RANGER RICK

For the little ones in your life, give the gift of learning and discovery with Ranger Rick Magazine through our website and AWF receives a portion of your rate.



VOLUNTEER

Join AWF on hands-on conservation projects in the field. We work with our affiliates to offer volunteer opportunities across the state.

Leave Your Legacy with the Arizona Wildlife Federation

Planned giving is an important and effective way that you can support the work and mission of Arizona Wildlife Federation. By including the AWF in your will, trust, or retirement plan, you can have a powerful impact on wildlife conservation in Arizona. Your gift to AWF can be a part of your legacy, one that helps ensure Arizona’s wildlife and public lands are protected for generations to come.

There are several ways that you can leave a lasting gift to AWF.

- An easy and popular way is to include a gift in your will or revocable trust.
- Another easy way is to name AWF as a beneficiary in a bank, investment, insurance, or retirement account.
- If you are 72 or older, you can make a current gift from a retirement account that counts toward your annual required distribution.
- You can also make your annual gift to AWF with appreciated stock or through your donor-advised fund.

Regardless of your preferred approach, we are honored by the generosity of those of you who leave a gift through your estate. Including the Arizona Wildlife Federation in your estate plan ensures that your values will endure and future generations will benefit from your thoughtful foresight. Your legacy of caring for wildlife will live on through your gift to AWF.

If you have already included AWF in your will or trust, or are interested in more information, please contact Alan Knobloch at alan@azwildlife.org

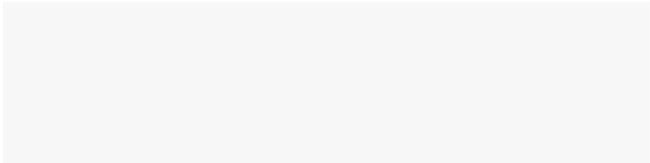


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