MEMO **S-2**

TO: Larry D. Voyles, Director

FROM: Mike Senn, Assistant Director, Wildlife Management Division

PRESENTER: Josh Avey, Habitat Branch Chief

TITLE: Request for the Commission to Approve the Purchase of the approximately 160-acre Foster Ranch Property for the Development of the Northern Arizona Shooting Range located in Coconino County, Arizona.

DESCRIPTION: The Commission will be asked to vote to approve the purchase of the approximately 160-acre Foster Ranch Property for the development of the Northern Arizona Shooting Range located in Coconino County, Arizona. The Commission may vote to take action on, or provide the Department direction on this item.

DATE: April 30, 2010

Summary:

In 1998, the Arizona Game and Fish Department (Department) began its efforts to acquire a site to construct a shooting range facility in the Flagstaff area in order to provide a recreating shooting opportunity to the public. Flagstaff is the largest city in Arizona without a public shooting range, forcing recreational shooters to use makeshift areas, such as cinder pits in the forest, and causing law enforcement personnel to travel to other cities for training purposes. A local shooting range would promote multi-purpose venues including rifle sight-in, pistol, shotgun, clay target, and archery.

Most recently, during a 90-day period, personnel from the Department's Development, Shooting Range, and Habitat Branches in partnership with the Flagstaff Regional Office and the Coconino National Forest (Forest) evaluated a total of 24 sites. On June 27, 2009 the Commission directed the Department to continue due-diligence on the proposed Willard Springs Land Exchange with the Forest, execute the Agreement To Initiate and dedicated funding to initiate the NEPA EIS scoping for FY 2010.

Additionally, the Commission dedicated funding to simultaneously evaluate Department/Forest recommended alternative sites (Cochrane Hill and Winona/Telegraph Range sites) to determine if acquiring these sites would reduce the proposed Forest timeline of 10 years or save millions of dollars in costs associated with the federal land exchange process and continue to consider any suitable private parcel. The Commission also refined the project's objective: *To develop a local shooting range with the potential to expand into a regional facility located within 30 minutes of downtown Flagstaff by the year 2013.* To date the Department continues to pursue the following: (1) The Willard Springs Land Exchange, (2) Evaluation of two alternative Forest exchange sites, (3) The Foster Ranch private parcel. Considering the protracted history of this project and previous Commission direction, the purchase the 160-acre Foster Ranch property will achieve the Department's and Commission's short-term objective.

Recommendation:
The Department recommends that the Commission vote to **APPROVE THE PURCHASE OF THE APPROXIMATELY 160-ACRE FOSTER RANCH PROPERTY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NORTHERN ARIZONA SHOOTING RANGE LOCATED IN COCONINO COUNTY, ARIZONA AND AUTHORIZE THE DIRECTOR, AS SECRETARY TO THE COMMISSION, TO EXECUTE ALL DOCUMENTS AS MAY BE NECESSARY.**

MS:JA:jsc