

Horseshoe Ranch Management Planning Process

Community-Based Process and Results



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Region VI

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Announcement

The announcement below was sent out by the Arizona Game and Fish Department (Department) to identified interested stakeholders and posted on our website. The announcement was also sent out statewide for media to pick up for posting.

Public Meeting Concerning the Development and Management of the Arizona Game and Fish Department's Horseshoe Ranch Property.

The public is invited to attend any or all of three meetings designed to take public comment on the development and management of the Arizona Game and Fish Department's newly acquired Horseshoe Ranch property 45 minutes north of Phoenix, in the Agua Fria National Monument. We are looking for your ideas and input on various management scenarios for this site that will be presented during these meetings. Meetings will consist of an information session highlighting the history, proposed development and management and purposes for acquiring the property, followed by an open forum session where the public's ideas and reactions to our proposed management plan will be solicited. Meeting locations, times and dates are as follows:

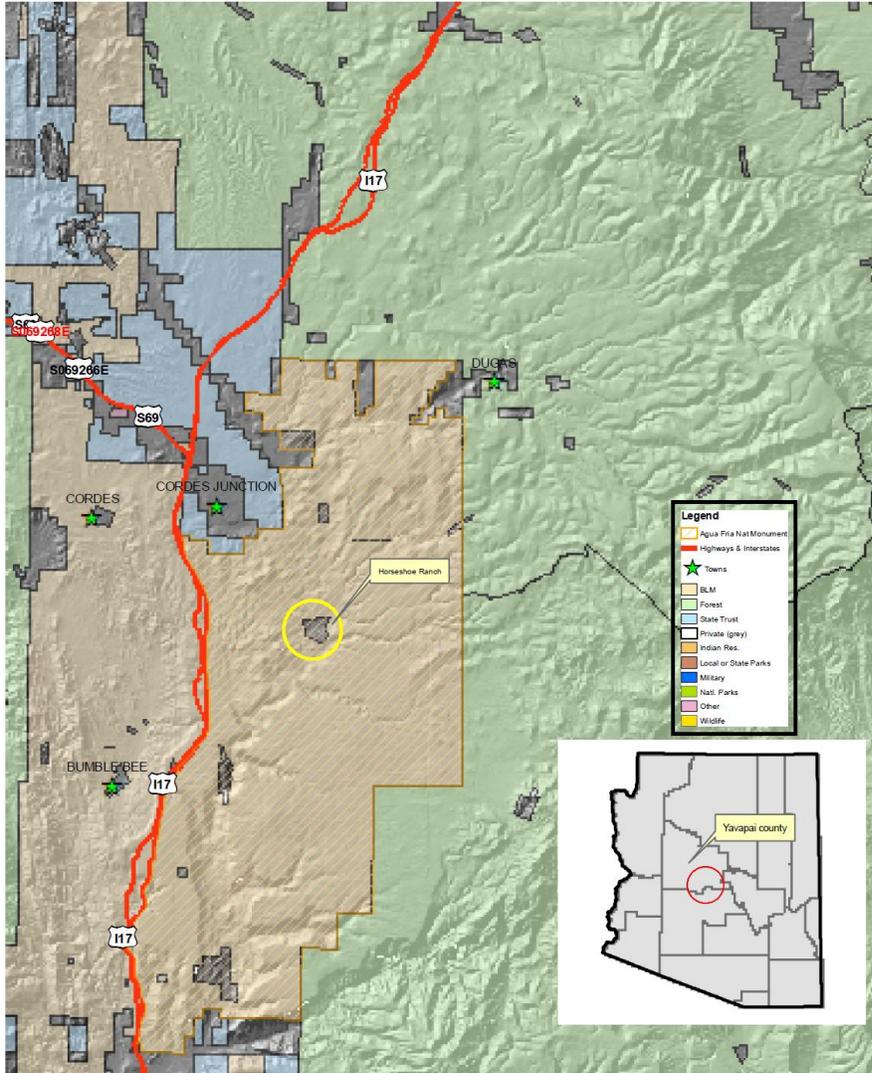
- **Phoenix Office of the Arizona Game and Fish Department on Oct 4th from 6-8pm In the Eagle Room**
- **Black Canyon City, on Oct 5th from 6-8PM at Albin's Civic Center 19055 E. K-Mine rd.**
- **Cordes junction on Oct 6th from 6-8PM at Mayer High School, in Mayer (follow signs to public meeting room).**

Background

The Arizona Game and Fish Department (Department), as directed by the Arizona Game and Fish Commission, is to prepare an area management plan for the deeded property acquired, referred to as the Horseshoe Ranch. The development of this plan was to include a community-based approach, as directed by the Director's Goal and Objective #11, to share our ideas with the local community and interested stakeholders, and solicit ideas for the management of the property. This community-based approach is to be used as a potential template identifying opportunities for expansion, leveraging or enhancing available Department dollars for acquiring, developing, operating and/or managing properties while also maintaining the purposes and values by which the property was acquired. Identification and evaluation of enterprise oriented activities that would be consistent with the property's purpose that would generate revenue to aid in the operation and maintenance would also be considered in this process.

Description – planning area

The management planning area includes the 200 deeded acres base property of the ranch. The ranch is located within the Agua Fria National Monument, 50 miles north of Phoenix (Map 1).



Map 1 Horseshoe Ranch, Yavapai county, Arizona.

Scoping

- Pre-acquisition planning 2010
 - Jan 28th from 9-2pm
 - Jan 29th
 - April 4th
 - April 8th
- Post-acquisition, community-based management planning 2011
 - Oct 4th from 6-8pm
 - Oct 5th from 6-8pm
 - Oct 6th from 6-8pm
 - Funding partners meeting was held: 3 attended
 - 3 public meetings were held: 38 people attended
 - Additional meeting representation requested:
 - Arizona Antelope Foundation
 - Sonoran Audubon Society
- Summary of the Process

The original scoping process began when the acquisition was initiated in 2010. The purpose for this meeting was to conduct a roundtable planning session for exploring stakeholder interest and ideas related to the management of the deeded property for potential benefit by diversity of groups and to identify any potential long-term partnerships for managing and/or funding of the property. An initial stakeholder list was developed and invitations were sent out through evite. Stakeholder meetings were held at the Department's Phoenix Headquarters, Phoenix Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and again at the Phoenix Headquarters for specific groups (ie. Arizona Antelope Foundation). The stakeholder list was carried over and comments were incorporated into the post-acquisition scoping process for consideration in the development of the management planning process.

The scoping for the management planning process began with a meeting that included only the financially vested partners (those that contributed funding that assisted in the total funds by which the property was acquired). The purpose for this meeting was to gather input for the community-based planning process for development of the management plan for the operation and maintenance of the deeded property. This meeting was held out of the Department's Mesa Regional office. The meeting was similar in format and content as subsequent meetings for the general public (see next paragraph); however, more detailed information was provided regarding the Coordinated Resource Management Planning process for the allotments.

Three public meetings were held to scope for the management plan; one at the Department's Phoenix Headquarters and two additional meetings within the communities of Black Canyon City and Cordes Junction. All community meetings were open to the general public and offered the opportunity for direct discussion. Handouts were provided to collect input on the models presented and for input on resource management interests during the meeting. An email address was established as a forum for public comments as well. In addition, the meetings were recorded to assist with capturing some of the

discussion. The announcement was hosted on the Department's internet site, sent out as an internal media monitoring highlight, and was issued as a statewide media announcement. The comment period was open at the time of the meetings and closed two weeks later. The materials from the meetings were also posted to the Department website along with the email address for commenting.

The community meetings included a presentation of background information: location, how the acquisition was funded and the purpose, identification of funding partners, biological/cultural resources, water rights, preliminary management concepts at the time of the acquisition, community based approach, proposed management models and the next steps in the planning process.

Proposed management models were developed using pre-acquisition stakeholder input and input from Department staff. The models were presented as preliminary ideas for management with request for the public to review and comment on them. The public was encouraged to identify alternative management approaches and/or specific resource interests.

- Summary of Public Input

The input received on the management models was based on a very small sample size, and included emailed comments and information from the discussions within each of the community meetings and vested partners meeting. The combined total of people in attendance at these meetings included 41 participants.

Management Model exercise

The public was asked to choose their preference of management model as presented; or alternatively to identify combinations of models and/or suggest other ideas for how the planning area could be managed (Other (Hybrid) – see Figure 1).

Management models presented:

Traditional wildlife area:

- Operated by the Department and occupied by an Area Manager
- Ranch used as center for species and habitat management operations and subleased grazing operations
- Visitor's center and some amenities
- Ranch and facilities available for internal/external projects, activities & events
- Funding for operations derived largely from Department resources

Outreach facility:

- Operated by the Department and occupied by an Area Manager
- Ranch used as base property for species and habitat management operations and subleased grazing operations
- Ranch with visitor's center and some amenities.
- Developed and used as a "destination facility" for outdoor and environmental education- camps, workshops, events and similar; including infrastructure development for these purposes

- Uses might result in cost-sharing
- Ranch may be occupied for periods of time by educational staff/leaders. Supervision of some activities delegated to others (educators, etc.)

Cost recovery:

- Operational control maintained by the Department
- Ranch used as center for species and habitat management operations and subleased grazing operations
- Office and other spaces rented to other users, limiting availability for outreach and to visitors
- Some Users charged via “User Play, User Pay” for access to property for parking and camping, etc.
- Operational funding would likely be a mix of Department and external sources
- Other lessees might share appropriate levels of contracted management responsibility

Concessionaire: **may require change to state law

- Ranch may or may not have a live-on-site Area Manager
- Ranch may or may not be used as center for habitat management operations, but acquisition purposes must be maintained
- Ranch may or may not have a visitor’s center, amenities, and interpretive elements.
- Much or most of ranch turned over to a concessionaire to run as dude ranch, bed and breakfast, RV camping facility, etc.
- Concessionaire may or may not be our livestock operator
- Most operational funding would come from and be used by concessionaire, with lease income to the Department

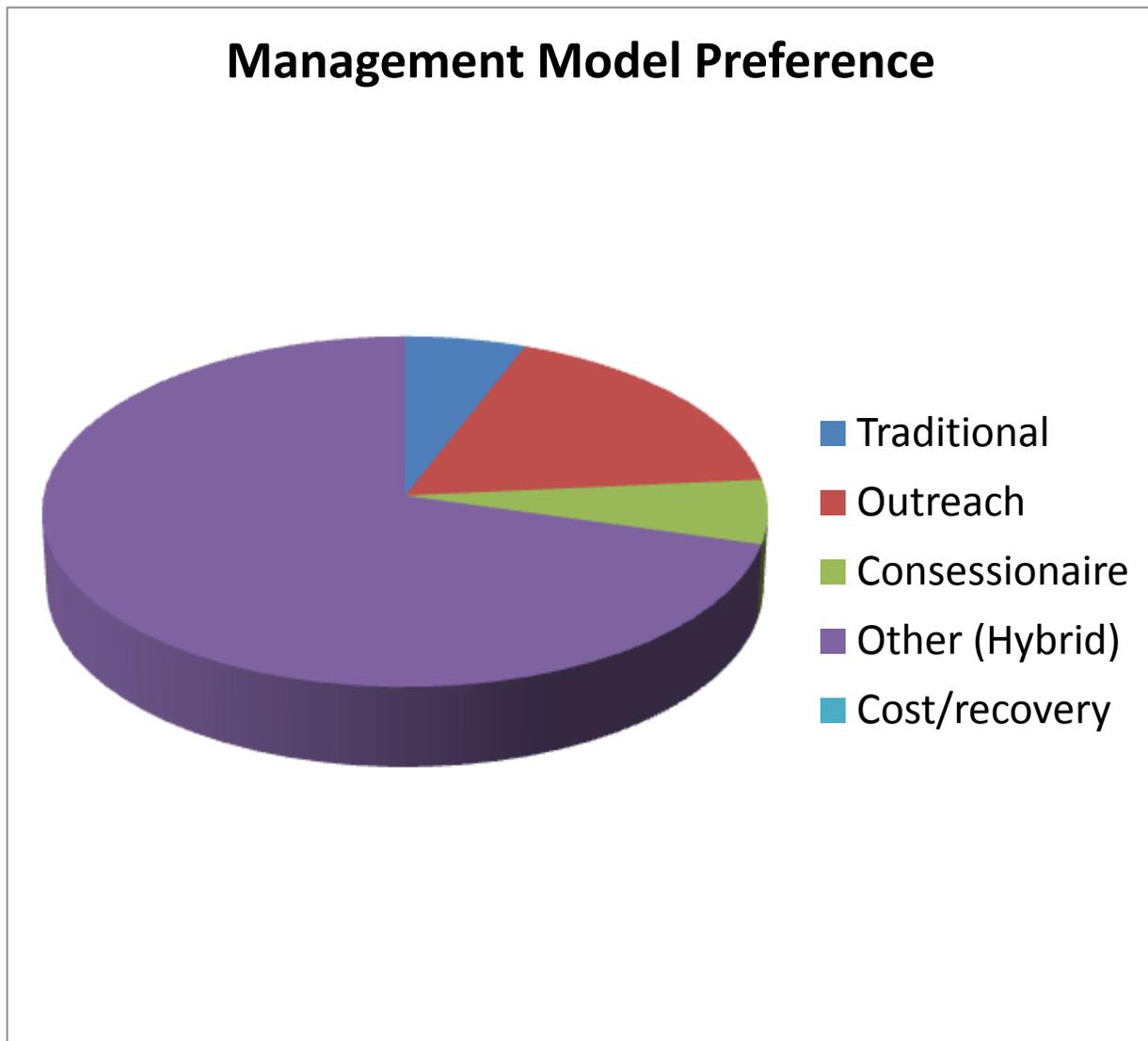


Figure 1. Outcome of the management model exercise based on 17 comments received.

Note**All the alternatives are conditioned by a commitment to preserve the purposes for which the property was acquired.*

Hybrid Model and/or Other Management Suggestions:

- Concessionaire and outreach models combined for using a basic approach for hunter education and livestock management as a facility to help educate all users on habitat, wildlife and livestock uses and restoration.
- Combination of the traditional and outreach models with the main focus on wildlife habitat management and use for endangered species plus traditional grazing operations.
- Use for multiple functions due to the size, location, existing facilities, accessibility and previous use history: facilities would work well for conference/retreat purposes, educational/outreach

events, and some recreational activities such as festivals. These would all be low impact and could also generate revenue.

- Elements from all the models could be implemented and should not be viewed as mutually exclusive. For example elements from both the outreach and concessionaire models incorporate a guest operation, outdoor and environmental education.
- Use for public access for general aviation aircraft for camping, hunting, hiking and other recreational purposes.
- Growing of native seed, reducing costs and perhaps even generating some revenue by cooperatively growing seed with non-profit groups and/or partner groups or with commercial growers and taking a portion of the seed to use in restoration efforts.
- Development of an education center and allowing some use by BLM, etc for office space to generate some revenue.
- Provide as a teaching center for off grid solar power systems of various types and sizes.
- Only utilize a recreational focus.

Resource Interests and Management Opportunities Exercise

The public was asked to place a 1-10 ranking on resource and management interests within three main categories: wildlife habitat conservation, outdoor education/recreation, and revenue generation. Each main category was subdivided further to include a total of 22 subcategories (see Appendix A): aquatic habitat, riparian habitat, important bird area, seed crops, native plants, no agriculture; creation of trails and wildlife viewing, sport fish, historic and cultural, public access, outdoor recreation facilities, outdoor education facilities (youth/adult), public events, volunteer opportunities outdoor/education activities, agriculture for livestock, ranching tradition, private concessionaire, minimize public access and require use fees, rental facilities for camping/RV, overnight room rental, office rental, volunteers for ranch operations and management.

A total of 15 completed forms were received. The top (5) resource and management interests derived from priorities within the subcategories included:

- Aquatic habitat conservation and public access (tied for #1 priority)
- Riparian habitat conservation
- Creation of nature trails, wildlife education and wildlife viewing opportunities
- Providing facilities for non-education related public events
- Providing facilities for youth & adult outdoor, wildlife and environmental education on the ranch

Several other wildlife and outreach interests were identified. There was minimal interest within the revenue category. Further evaluation of interests beyond the top 5 is not insightful due to the small sample size.

Issues identified

- Summary of Issues Identified
 - not early enough involvement by stakeholders
 - should optimize all model options
 - designed management models without public input
 - short timeline
 - commission decision without public input into the models or process
 - process should be combined with the larger planning process for the allotments

Preferred management model criteria

- Must fit with the parameters of the funding sources by which acquired
- In line with the Department's mission and vision
- Commission approved

Questions/responses, clarification

In general, the most commonly asked questions or needs for clarification was related to the two separate processes being the management planning process for the deeded property, compared to the larger coordinated resource management planning (CRMP) process for the Horseshoe and Copper Creek Allotments. The Department clarified the processes and encouraged participation in both. Dates, locations and times were provided to the public for engagement into the CRMP process at the community meetings.

Preferred Management Model

Based on the public/stakeholder input, a hybrid/combination of models, interests and management opportunities was preferred. This model would utilize the property for outreach, education, recreation and public access. The preferred alternative would allow for a diversity of activities and interests to allow for maximum opportunity to benefit a broad array of users/groups. The preferred model would provide for uses that preserve the purposes for which the property was acquired (ie. fish and wildlife habitats, public access to open space, outdoor education and recreation, ranching tradition). Other values and/or management opportunities under the preferred alternative may include potential for user charges (ie. access for parking and camping, etc.) to provide viable cost recovery and potential to offset operational/maintenance costs, emphasis on youth activities, historic and cultural resources, creation of trails, seed crops to benefit wildlife, etc.

Appendix A

Horseshoe Ranch Community Based Management Planning Process

What resource values and/or management opportunities are important to you?

Please take a second to identify the **top ten** resource values/management opportunities that are **important to you**, under the three categories provided with a numerical **ranking from 1 to 10** (1=highest importance, 10=lowest importance), only list 10 and please return the completed form to one of the AGFD representatives present.

Wildlife habitat conservation

- Aquatic habitat for native fish and amphibians (Gila chub, lowland leopard frogs, Gila topminnow, desert pupfish, Mexican gartersnakes)
- Riparian habitat for birds and wildlife
- Agua Fria River Important Bird Area – National Audubon
- Limited agriculture to grow seed crops for game birds and other native wildlife
- Limited agriculture to grow native plants as a seed source for offsite habitat restoration
- No agriculture to conserve water

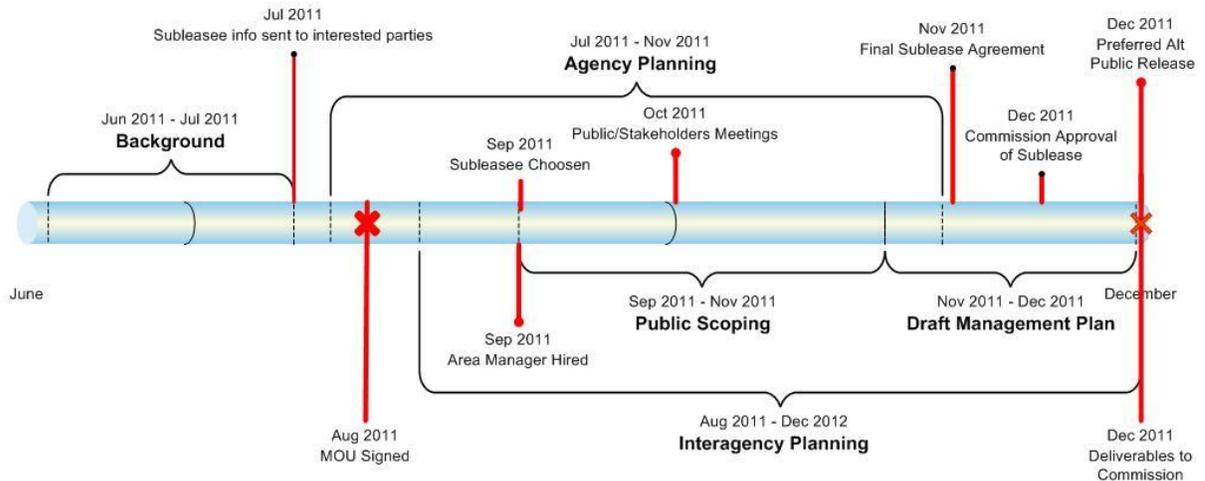
Outdoor education/recreation

- Creating nature trails, wildlife education and wildlife viewing opportunities
- Aquatic habitat for sport fish
- Historic and Native American cultural resources
- Maintaining public access across the ranch to recreate on public land
- Providing facilities for outdoor recreation on the ranch (archery range, fishing, shooting sports)
- Providing facilities for youth & adult outdoor, wildlife and environmental education on the ranch (workshops, camps, training or other educational events)
- Providing facilities for non- education related public events (Sportsman group banquets, Archaeology symposiums, corporate trainings, agency professional trainings)
- Volunteer opportunities to support outdoor, wildlife and environmental education activities

Revenue generation

- Limited agriculture for livestock pasture
- Preserving the tradition of livestock grazing and associated ranch uses
- Generating maximum revenue through private concessionaire
- Minimizing public access and/or use fees for ranch facilities
- Providing RV/trailer/tent camping facilities
- Providing overnight room rentals (bed/bath)
- Providing office and facilities rentals for researchers and/or agency professional staff
- Volunteer opportunities to support ranch operations and maintenance

Appendix B



Horseshoe Ranch
Community-Based Process Timeline