

**ARIZONA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT
 HABITAT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM
 HABITAT ENHANCEMENT AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PROPOSAL**

PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Title: <i>Atascosa Rx Burn</i>		Project No.
Region/GMU: <i>Region 5/ Unit 36B</i>	HPC: <i>Tucson</i>	
Project Type: <i>Prescribed Burn</i>		
Project Description: <i>The Nogales Ranger District is completing NEPA for most of the District that is west of I-19. This 195,000 acre NEPA project covers about 53% of the approx. 365,000 acre Game Management Unit 36B.</i> <i>The Atascosa Prescribed Burn will be the second in a series of planned burns and will cover approx. 7% of Unit 36B. Implementation is planned for 2011.</i>		
Wildlife Species to Benefit: <i>Mostly Coues whitetail. Others include Gould's turkey, Mearns and Gambels quail, mountain lion, bear and javalina.</i>		
Possible Funding Partners: <i>NWTF, USFS</i>		
Implementation Schedule: <i>Atascosa Rx Burn</i>	NEPA Compliance: (if applicable)	
Beginning: <i>January, 2011</i>	Completed: Yes ___ No <u>X</u>	
Completed: <i>June, 2011</i>	Projected Completion Date: <i>October, 2009</i>	

PROJECT FUNDING

SBG Funds Requested: <i>\$ 40,000</i>
Cost Share Funds: <i>\$ 260,000</i>
Total Project Costs: <i>\$ 300,000</i>

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

Applicant: <i>Kent Ellett, Nogales District Ranger</i> (please print)	Address: <i>Nogales Ranger District</i> <i>303 Old Tucson Road</i> <i>Nogales, AZ 85621</i>
Telephone: <i>520-761-6002 (office);</i> <i>520-975-0902 (cell)</i>	
AGFD Contact and Phone No. (If applicant is not AGFD personnel) <i>Mark Frieberg 520-762-8172</i>	
Coordinated with: <i>AZGFD, USFWS, NWTF.</i>	Date: <i>August, 2009</i>
Applicant's signature:	Date: <i>August 25, 2009</i>

WAS PROJECT PRESENTED TO THE LOCAL HPC? YES X NO _____

HAS PROJECT BEEN SUBMITTED IN PREVIOUS YEARS? No

IF SO WAS IT FUNDED? NA

NEED STATEMENT/PROBLEM ANALYSIS:

Based on the 20 permanent monitoring sites within the project area the Atascosa Mountains are productive with most area being in mid to late-seral ecological condition with a rating of fair to good range condition. Forage production varies from 500 to 1,800 lbs/acre depending on soil type but is typically between 700 to 900 lbs/acre overall.

However, most of the project area has not had a fire for quite a long time and is in Fire Regime Condition Class (FRCC) 3. A small percentage of the area is in FRCC 2. This high departure from the typical FRCC means the composition of vegetation and fuel loadings differ from historic conditions enough to put the area at high risk of losing key habitat components.

In 2009 we managed a 2,400 acre fire within the project area for resource benefit; however, most of the project area has not burned for decades.

The proposed prescribed burn is needed to achieve an efficient approach to vegetation and fuels management that would improve wildlife habitat and the ecological health of the Atascosa Mountains as well as decrease the risk of a catastrophic wildfire.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

The project objectives are:

- *To improve the availability of forage and vigor of decadent stands of browse.*
- *To reduce the fuel load and raise the tree canopy to reduce the risk of a catastrophic fire. This initial entry will also help us to better manage future natural ignition wildfires for resource benefit.*
- *Improve access for wildlife and hunters by reducing browse species such as wait-a-minute and cat claw.*
- *Improve forage production and vigor of the grass species by removing accumulated thatch/litter buildup.*
- *Provide a mosaic pattern of burned and unburned. It is expected that 60 - 70% of the area will be treated during this initial entry.*

PROJECT STRATEGIES:

Implementation of the prescribed burn is planned for January - June, 2011. It is expected that we will treat areas around Mexican Spotted Owl (MSO) protected activity centers (PACs) such as Pine Canyon as well as create a black line along Peck Canyon in January, 2011 when lower temperatures and higher humidity can hold the fire in check and provide for low fire intensity and severity.

Ignition will be conducted by hand around the PACs. Helicopters using plastic sphere dispensers will be used to assist in igniting the black line along Peck Canyon.

Then crews will come back in, sometime between April and June, 2011, when burn conditions are favorable and resources are available to treat the rest of the burn unit.

Overall the fire will be managed for low to moderate severity with pockets of openings (5 to 20 acres each) generated from short runs with active torching.

The prescribed fire treatment will be implemented in accordance with the Atascosa Rx Burn Plan which will describe in much greater detail how the burn will be conducted. The burn plan will be developed in 2010 and be on file at the Nogales Ranger District office. The burn plan ensures the implementation is in compliance with the NEPA decision and incorporates further input and review by the various Forest program specialists.

PROJECT LOCATION:

The project is located about 13 miles NW of Nogales on the Nogales Ranger District, Santa Cruz County, Arizona in Townships 22 & 23 South, Range 11 & 12 East. The project area is bordered by Peck Canyon on the North, Wise Mesa & Pena Blanca Canyon on the East, Ruby Road on the South and FR109 - Corral Nuevo on the West. Elevations range from 3,490 to 6,420 feet.

LAND OWNERSHIP AT PROJECT SITE (Please state specifically if PRIVATE PROPERTY and provide landowner's name):

The project area is entirely on National Forest System lands.

IF PRIVATE PROPERTY, IS THERE A STEWARDSHIP AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE LANDOWNER AND THE DEPARTMENT? NA

HABITAT DESCRIPTION:

The project area is fairly large and is comprised mostly of Madrean Evergreen Forest: Oak-Pine Series, Madrean Evergreen Forest & Woodland: Encinal (Oak) Series, Semidesert Grasslands: Sonoran Desert Scrub and small riparian areas

Typical plant species include grey, emory, silverleaf, and blue oaks, madrone, pinyon pine, alligator juniper, acacias, mesquite, ocotillo, sotol, sideoats grama, sprangletop, lovegrass, panicums, muhlenbergias and a wide variety of forbs and flowering plants.

The picture below is of the East side of the Atascosa Mountains. The mountain tops to the toe slopes are in the project area.



The picture below is the head of Ramanote Canyon looking towards Atascosa Peak. The whole area in the picture accounts for 12 - 15% of the project area.



ITEMIZED USE OF FUNDS:

Personnel	Number	Daily or Hourly Rate	Days or Hrs.	Total Cost
Burn Boss	1	\$ 350	12	\$4,200
Firing Boss	2	\$ 300	10	\$6,000
Holding Boss	2	\$ 300	12	\$7,200
Ignition Crew	1	\$ 2,500	10	\$25,000
Holding Crew	3	\$ 3,000	10	\$90,000
Safety Officer	1	\$ 350	12	\$4,200
Type 3 Helicopter	1	\$ 1,100	30	\$33,000
Water Tenders	1	\$ 1,500	7	\$10,500
Medical Unit	1	\$ 1,000	10	\$10,000
Engines, Type 3	1	\$ 1,200	6	\$7,200
Engines, Type 6	4	\$ 1,000	15	\$60,000
Dip Tank Set Up	1	\$ 1,500	3	\$4,500
Line Prep	1	\$ 3,000	8	\$24,000
Fuel	1	\$ 300	12	\$3,600
PSDs	20000	\$ 0.25	1	\$5,000
Misc. Supplies	1			\$2,600
Misc. Overhead	1			\$3,000
			GRAND TOTAL:	\$300,000

Using the estimated figures above the cost of the Rx burn would be \$12/acre.

LIST COOPERATORS AND DESCRIBE POTENTIAL PARTICIPATION:

- *Rio Rico and Tubac Fire Departments will assist in implementing the burn.*
- *The three livestock grazing permittees for this area will rest the respective pastures to retain the fine fuels to carry the fire and continue resting them until it has had a sufficient time to recovery from the treatment.*
- *The Forest Service will cover the balance of the funds needed.*

PROJECT MONITORING PLAN:

Twenty permanent monitoring sites are located within the project area and include:

1. *Quadrat frequency transects to determine and monitor plant frequency and composition and ground cover.*
2. *Forage production transects.*
3. *Fetch analysis which monitors the interspace distance between plant species*
4. *Photo points.*

We will add to this:

- 1. Line intercept transects to monitor differences in canopy cover.*
- 2. Basal area surveys.*
- 3. A measuring stick will be added to the photos to monitor how effective the treatment is in removing the lower branches and raising the canopy.*

Additionally we will have a Fire Effects Analyst or Fire Use Module on scene during the burn. Biologists will conduct MSO PAC monitoring and effects to rodent/prey base pre & post treatment per NEPA decision and Biological Assessment/consultation with USFWS.

PROJECT MAINTENANCE:

Initial burns are to be followed periodically with maintenance burns to ensure fire is present and able to play its natural role in the ecosystem. Findings from monitoring efforts will be used to determine when maintenance burns are warranted.

PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT TO BE FILED BY :

Nogales Ranger District, Coronado NF.

WATER DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS (see attached worksheet): *NA*

TREE SHEARING (AGRA-AXE, PUSH) PROJECTS (see attached worksheet): *NA*

SEND COMPLETED APPLICATIONS TO:

**Game Branch, AZGFD
5000 West Carefree Highway
Phoenix, AZ 85086 - 5000
rthompson@azgfd.gov**