

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

PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Title: Buck Springs Allotment habitat improvement		Project No.
Region/GMU: Region II, GMU 5A	HPC: Flagstaff	
Project Type: Repair existing elk enclosures on aspen and Bebb willow areas on Buck Springs Allotment		
<p>Project Description: The Arizona Elk Society has recently facilitated the acquisition of the livestock-grazing permit and having this permit waived back to the Forest Service for conservation purposes. One of the key elements of this project is to reduce ungulate use of headwater sponge meadows by eliminating livestock grazing and improving upland forage availability to draw elk from these meadows and the downstream riparian corridors. Another key component of the Buck Springs project is to protect riparian communities and aspen and Bebb willow groves by repairing enclosure fences that are in place but have been breached by falling trees during the heavy snow experienced in the winter of 2009-10. This will allow these broadleaved species to grow to a height where they are not as susceptible to hedging by elk and other wild ungulates. All of these aspen clones are at risk if not protected.</p>		
Wildlife Species to Benefit: White-tailed Deer, Mule Deer, Elk, Turkey, Black Bear, forest-dwelling neotropical migrant birds, and Little Colorado River spinedace.		
Possible Funding Partners: Arizona Elk Society and Arizona Deer Association		
Implementation Schedule:	NEPA Compliance: (if applicable)	
Beginning: July 1, 2010	Completed: Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Completed: June 30, 2012	Projected Completion Date:	

PROJECT FUNDING

SBG Funds Requested: \$ 4,000
<p>Cost Share Funds: \$ The Arizona Elk Society has expended approximately \$170,000 to facilitate the acquisition and waiving the livestock grazing permit back to the Forest Service. The Forest Service has also agreed to provide all of the materials required to repair the three enclosures in the Merritt Springs area. Additionally, the Forest Service has agreed to provide five person days to assist in this effort.</p>
Total Project Costs: \$8,000.00

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

Applicant: Jim deVos, Arizona Elk Society (please print) Telephone: 928-420-6449	Address: 405 S. Antelope Dr. Dewey, AZ 86327
AGFD Contact and Phone No. (If applicant is not AGFD personnel)	
Coordinated with: Arizona Game and Fish Department, Forest Service, Arizona Elk Society. This project was identified as a priority at the 2010 planning meeting between these entities.	Date: Spring and Summer 2010

 Applicant's signature:	Date:9-1-2010
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SEND COMPLETED APPLICATIONS TO:

**Game Branch
2221 W. Greenway Rd.
Phoenix, AZ 85023
Ron Thompson**

WAS PROJECT PRESENTED TO THE LOCAL HPC? YES X NO

This concept was discussed with , chair of the Flagstaff HPC and he was in support of the project, however, the project was not formally submitted to the full HPC committee.

HAS PROJECT BEEN SUBMITTED IN PREVIOUS YEARS? IF SO WAS IT FUNDED?

No

NEED STATEMENT/PROBLEM ANALYSIS:

The Buck Springs allotment is comprised of approximately 70,000 acres located in the southeast corner of the Coconino National Forest in north-central Arizona. Approximately 96% of this allotment is contained within the East Clear Creek watershed, which is one of the most ecologically diverse areas in the region. Due to this areas' highly varied topography, the area is largely unsuitable for livestock grazing under current conditions. In 2009, the AZ Game and Fish Department and AZ Elk Society purchased the property and grazing allotment in an effort to improve the habitat for all wildlife in this rich ecosystem. Vegetation within the area consists of coniferous forests with small inclusions of deciduous species including aspen and maple at higher elevations and, juniper woodlands at lower elevations. One of the unique aspects of this area is the large number of deciduous trees such as aspen and Bebb willow that provide a great deal of variety to the habitat complexity of the area. Unfortunately, many of the stands of these ecologically important species have been lost due to encroachment of conifers and reduction of naturally-occurring fires; both of which disfavor the presence of deciduous trees.

One of the management strategies that has been in place to help restore deciduous trees to the area has been to fence many of the remaining stands of deciduous trees to reduce the herbivory that has been found to limit reestablishment of these species. Due to the heavy snows experienced in recent winters, many of the enclosures have been breached by falling trees allowing elk and other ungulates to have access to the young shoots of these trees. This in turn compromises the ability of the stands to regenerate. This proposal will repair three enclosures in the Merritt Springs area facilitating reestablishment of the ecological complexity of the region.

On of the concerns of the Arizona Elk Society is that the Forest Service has asked the Department for reduced elk populations in much of the Coconino National Forest due to elk herbivory on aspen and other deciduous trees that are important components of a diverse forest. Protecting and allowing these aspen clones to grow and prosper, coupled with other implemented and planned projects to aid in aspen regeneration and sponge meadow recovery, the Arizona Elk Society believes that elk herds can be allowed to expand in response to range resource recovery.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

To repair fencing on three wildlife exclosures to protect aspen/willows/maples from excessive herbivory.

These are existing enclosures that have been identified by the Forest Service as needing repair at this time. Further, at the 2010 project planning meeting between the Forest Service, the Arizona Game and Fish Department, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Arizona Elk Society, this type of project was identified as being important and placed on the list of potential projects for 2010. Some of this work was scheduled for summer of 2010, however, time limitations precluded completing this project.

PROJECT STRATEGIES:

The Arizona Elk Society will use contract labor to repair three enclosure fences that have been identified as being a priority by the Forest Service.

PROJECT LOCATION:

There are three enclosures in the Merritt Springs area that have been identified as being priority by the Forest Service local staff. Merritt Springs is on the Buck Springs allotment

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

US Forest Service

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

HABITAT DESCRIPTION:

Vegetation within the area consists of coniferous forests with small inclusions of deciduous species including aspen and maple at higher elevations and, juniper woodlands at lower elevations. Many of these small inclusions of deciduous trees are at risk of elimination if not protected from excessive herbivory.

ITEMIZED USE OF FUNDS:

The Forest Service has agreed to provide all of the materials needed to repair these fences as a match to the SBG funding if awarded. The cash requested will be used to hire a fencing crew to replace and repair any breach in these enclosures to make them impermeable to elk and other ungulates.

LIST COOPERATORS AND DESCRIBE POTENTIAL PARTICIPATION:

US Forest Service will provide materials and human resources. Arizona Game and Fish Department in working on the project. The Arizona Elk Society will provide logistic and management support for the project. The existing MOU between the Forest Service and the Arizona Elk Society provides for no less than annual coordination meetings and at the spring 2010 coordination meeting, which was also attended by the Arizona Game and Fish Department Regional Supervisor and the Wildlife Program Manager and by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, repair of aspen protection fences was identified as an important management action for the Buck Springs allotment with all parties agreeing to provide funds and materials as available for the project.

PROJECT MONITORING PLAN:

AES will monitor for project completion.

PROJECT MAINTENANCE: N/A.

PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT TO BE FILED BY: Jim deVos will complete all required reports on behalf of the Arizona Elk Society