

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

Game Branch / HPC Project Number:	13-521
-----------------------------------	--------

PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Title: PERP (Pinaleño Ecosystem Restoration Project) – Treatment Block 2, Slash Treatments

Region and Game Management Unit: Region 5 / GMU 31

Local Habitat Partnership Committee (LHPC):

- Safford

Was the project presented to the LHPC?

YES[X] NO[]

Has this project been submitted in previous years? YES[] NO[X]

If Yes, was it funded? YES[] NO[] → **HPC Project #:**

Project Type: Landscape-scale restoration – includes pile-burning, and prescribed burning

Brief Project Summary:

The Safford Ranger District is implementing a restoration project in the higher elevations of the Pinaleño Mountains. This will help create strategic firefighting areas, as well as a key anchor point for future restoration efforts on the sides of the mountain range. The project will involve treatment of 2,641 acres of forest, utilizing silvicultural prescriptions including mechanical thinning and prescribed fire. The project also incorporates Christmas tree removal and public firewood gathering to treat fuels in the project area.

The project area is currently susceptible to wildfire and insect and disease outbreaks. These conditions threaten the listed and game species, and the overall health of the ecosystem. Over the past 100 years, fire suppression and other factors have diminished the natural ecological role of fire in the Pinaleño Mountains, resulting in overcrowded forest conditions and a heavy accumulation of dead trees (fuel load). These forest conditions increase the probability and consequences of severe wildfire in the area and increase the risk to forest resources, including listed species.

This proposal focuses solely on follow-up treatments to Treatment Block 2. Silvicultural treatments for Block 2 will occur in September 2013 through March 2014. Follow-up treatments, to include pile-burning and understory burning are scheduled to occur in 2014 post-thinning.

The National Wild Turkey Federation has entered into a Stewardship Agreement with the US Forest Service. To fulfill this agreement, the NWTF will provide approximately 20% matching to any funds provided by the Forest Service for the implementation of the project. Any funds gained through the HPC process will serve as matching funds for the NWTF to provide toward this agreement.

Big Game Wildlife Species to Benefit:

Gould’s Turkey – This species will benefit from increased understory grass and forb growth, and longer-term maturation of roost trees. New understory growth should be more nutrient-rich post-burning.

Coue’s White-tailed deer – This species will benefit from burning, which will increase grass and forb growth, and knock back shrubs to a height at which new growth is within reach. New growth will also be more palatable and nutrient-rich.

Bears – Bears will benefit from the rejuvenation of grasses, shrubs, and trees, which will increase berry/acorn production.

Implementation Schedule (Month/Day/Year): Overall Project Dates: September 2012 – March 2022 Treatment Block 2 (this proposal) Project Start Date: September 2013 Project End Date: March 2014	Environmental Compliance: NEPA Completed: YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No[] N/A[] Projected Completion Date: <u>December 2022</u> State Historic Preservation Office - Archaeological Clearance: YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No[] N/A[] Projected Completion Date: _____ Arizona Game and Fish Department EA Checklist: N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> To be Completed by: _____ Projected Completion Date: _____
---	--

PROJECT FUNDING

Special Big Game License Tag Funds Requested:	\$ 35,000
Cost Share or Matching Funds:	\$ 134,470
Total Project Costs:	\$ 169,470

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

Applicant (please print): Scott Lerich	Address: National Wild Turkey Federation Southwest Regional Biologist P. O. Box 1281 La Luz, NM 8833	E-mail: slerich@nwtf.net
Telephone: (575) 434-2936 (office)		Date: 8/27/13

AGFD Contact and Phone No. (If applicant is not AGFD personnel):
Devin Skinner 928-651-7582 or Duane Aubuchon

Project has been coordinated with:
USFS, AGFD, USFWS, NWTF, UofA, CBD, SIA, local public

NEED STATEMENT – PROBLEM ANALYSIS:

The vegetation in the Pinaleño Mountains is mainly comprised of mixed conifer forest, in which fire suppression and insect infestations have greatly changed natural conditions. The treatment area currently contains high quantities of dead and down material; woody species have encroached into the meadow areas, and the wooded areas are abnormally dense and lacking understory plant species. Generally, fuel conditions have strayed from the natural range of variation.

Treatment of the project area would benefit wildlife habitat and recreational uses, and will provide some stimulation of the local economy. Thinning and prescribed fire treatments in the area will improve Forest health, reduce the likelihood of uncharacteristically large or severe wildfires, restore meadows, improve wildlife habitat, and allow for better improved hunting opportunities in the future.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

We propose to thin and apply prescribed fires within the mixed conifer area (i.e., high elevations) of the Pinaleño Mountains to reduce fuel-loading, encourage understory growth, and restore the natural fire

regime. The eventual goal would be to allow natural ignition fires to once again play a natural ecological role throughout the mountain range. Benefits may also include the following: (1) improved wildlife habitat; (2) protection of old-growth Douglas-fir; (3) reduced threats to Federally-listed species, including Mexican spotted owls and Mount Graham red squirrels, (4) and improved forest health, evident in improved resistance and resilience to wildfire and insect outbreaks.

The first 5 treatment blocks are located on the south side of Swift Trail (Highway 366), and will dramatically increase the Forest Service's ability to fight fires that start on the south-facing (i.e., hotter, drier) slopes of the Pinaleno Mountains.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND STRATEGIES:

A series of treatment blocks are scheduled to be treated over a 10-year period. Block 1 treatments began in September 2012. Block 2 treatments will begin September 1st, 2013. This proposal is for a follow-up treatment in Block 2, which will involve understory burning to treat slash and ground fuels remaining after thinning occurs. Treatment is scheduled to take place between March and September of 2014.

Block 2 Follow-up Treatment will include the following:

Treatment	Acres
Prescribed burning post-treatment	410

Thinning within Treatment Block 2 will involve thinning from below, and using heavy equipment for treating trees up to 18 inches in diameter. Treatments will focus on creating a mosaic of forested areas with a scattering of small openings, and within the forested patches, a range of densities, so that thickly-forested areas are interspersed with more open areas. Follow-up treatments will include limited pile-burning and broadcast burning to address understory fuel-loading.

PROJECT LOCATION:

T 8 and 9 S, R23 and 24 E. See map for Forest Service portion of burn.

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

All lands fall within the Coronado National Forest

HABITAT DESCRIPTION:

The vegetation in the treatment area is mainly comprised of mixed conifer forest, interspersed with high-elevation meadows. Dominant tree species include Douglas-fir, Ponderosa pine, white pine, Engelmann spruce, corkbark fir, and white fir. These areas currently contain high quantities of dead and down material; woody species have encroached into the meadow areas, and the wooded areas are abnormally dense and lacking understory plant species. Elevation ranges from approximately 8,000 feet to 10,000 feet.

ITEMIZED USE OF FUNDS:

Year/Unit	Treatment Cost	Fuel Treatment Cost	Total Unit cost
2013	\$ 819,795.86	\$ 169,470.00	\$ 1,067,931.29
Grant Creek	\$ 819,795.86	\$ 169,470.00	\$ 1,067,931.29
2014	\$ 980,328.62	\$ 200,390.00	\$ 1,285,723.76
Treasure Park	\$ 980,328.62	\$ 200,390.00	\$ 1,285,723.76
2015	\$ 394,248.80	\$ 117,700.00	\$ 542,451.48
Shannon	\$ 394,248.80	\$ 117,700.00	\$ 542,451.48
Grand Total	\$ 2,194,373.28	\$ 487,560.00	\$ 2,896,106.53

LIST COOPERATORS AND DESCRIBE POTENTIAL PARTICIPATION:

USFS (primary agency – 80% financial), NWTF (stewardship agreement – primary contractors – 20% financial)

PROJECT MONITORING PLAN:

Pre- and post-burn fuel inventories, Mexican spotted owl surveys, Mount Graham red squirrel surveys (yearly), Gould’s turkey surveys, and pre- and post-burn photopoints.

PROJECT MAINTENANCE:

With the treatment of fuel conditions and initiation of prescribed fires, this project will allow the Safford Ranger District to incorporate the use of natural ignition wildfires in years following the project.

PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT TO BE FILED BY:

Craig Wilcox, Coronado National Forest Silviculturist
 Anne L. Casey, District Biologist
 Buddy Zale, Fire Management Officer

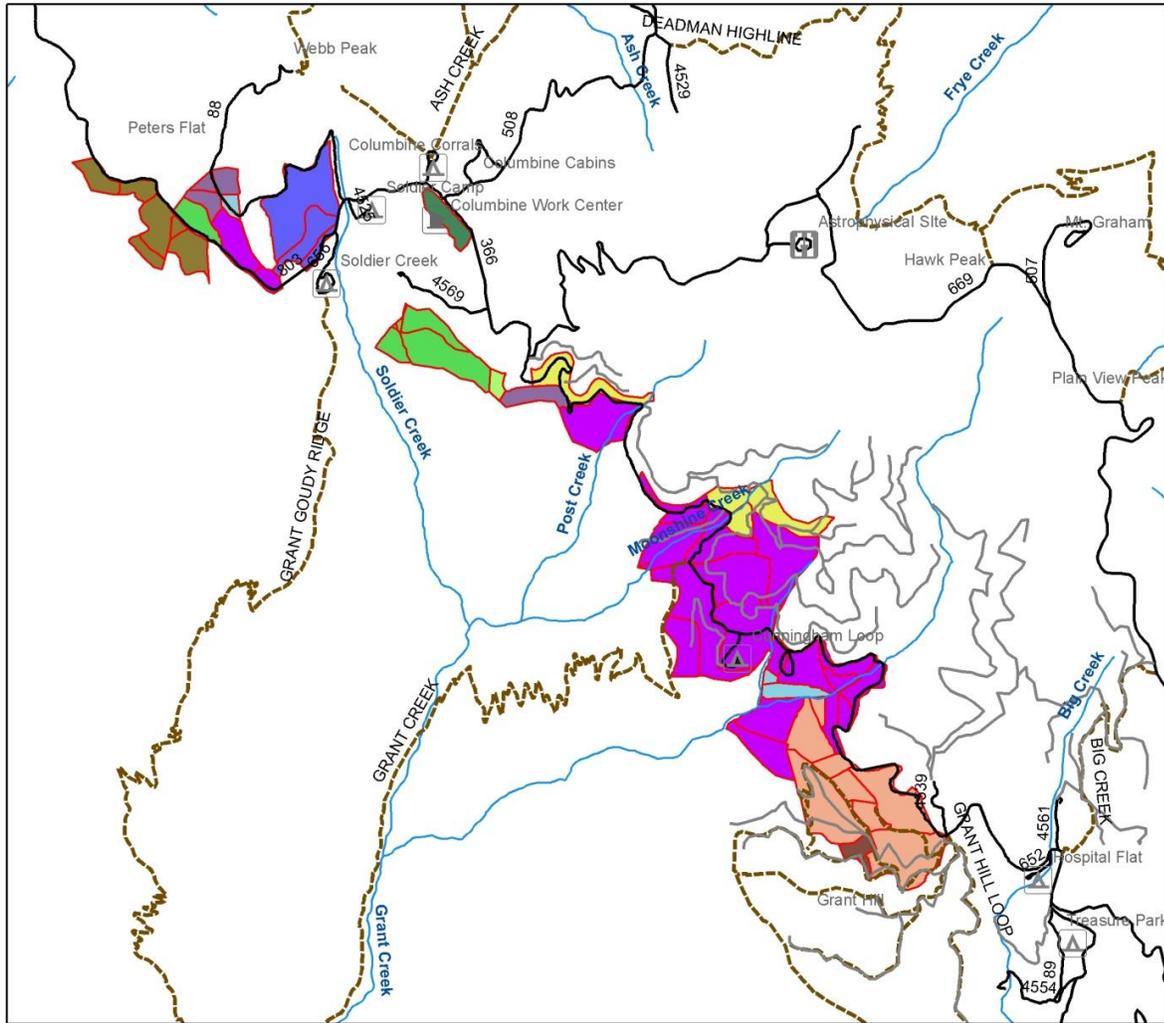
WATER DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS (*see attached worksheet*):

N/A

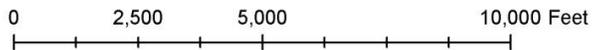
TREE SHEARING (AGRA-AXE, PUSH) PROJECTS (*see attached worksheet*):

N/A

MAP OF PROJECT AREA – Treatment Block 2 is the portion of the map east of Post Creek



Implementation 2013	
	No Silv; Lop/Scatter, Pile/Burn
	No Silv; Lop/Scatter, Pile/Burn, Underburn
	No Silv; Lop/Scatter, Underburn
	No Silv; Underburn
	Snags; Lop/Scatter, Pile/Burn
	Snags; Lop/Scatter, Pile/Burn, Underburn
	Thin 18"; Lop/Scatter, Pile/Burn
	Thin 18"; Lop/Scatter, Pile/Burn, Underburn
	Thin 9"; Lop/Scatter, Pile/Burn
	Thin 18"; Lop/Scatter, Underburn
	Thin 9"; Lop/Scatter, Underburn



**PERP: Implementation 2013
Columbine and Grant Creek**

