

**Arizona Habitat Partnership Committee (HPC) Meeting**  
**Minutes of February 1, 2014 – 9:00 AM**  
**Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) Headquarters, Phoenix, AZ**

**Present:**

Rana Tucker, AGFD  
Steve Rosenstock, AGFD  
Steve Clark, AZ Elk Society  
Clair Harris, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation  
Tom Mackin, Williams Flagstaff HPC  
Justin Watts, National Wild Turkey Federation  
Chirre Keckler, Kaibab National Forest  
Steve Sams, National Wild Turkey Federation  
Stephen Williams, Forage Resource Study Group  
Darren Tucker, AGFD  
Luke Thompson, AGFD  
Mike Godwin, AGFD  
Billy Masters, Springerville Alpine HPC  
John Tuter, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation  
Glen Dickens, AZ Antelope Foundation

Bob Birkeland, AGFD  
Dave Daniels, AGFD  
Andy Clark, AGFD  
Joe Currie, AGFD  
Velma Holt-Buhr, AGFD  
Duane Aubuchon, AGFD  
Bob Jacobs, Mule Deer Foundation  
Terry Herndon, Mule Deer Foundation  
Art Crager, Mule Deer Foundation  
Ruth Gregory, AGFD  
Brian Wakeling, AGFD  
Reuben Teran, AGFD  
Beth Humphrey, Apache Sitgreaves  
National Forests

Commissioner J.W. Harris chaired today's meeting in the absence of Commissioner Kurt Davis, Chairman of the State HPC.

**Introductions and Roll Call of Local HPCs:**

Forage Resource Study Group: Stephen Williams  
AZ Strip (reinstated): Luke Thompson  
Kingman: Velma Holt-Buhr  
Payson Natural Resources Committee: Dave Daniels  
Prescott: Darren Tucker  
Tucson: Rana Tucker  
Williams/Flagstaff: Tom Mackin

Winslow: Bob Birkeland  
Show Low: Bob Birkeland  
Springerville/Alpine: Billy Masters  
Southwest: No representative  
Sierra Vista Douglas: Glen Dickens  
Safford: Duane Aubuchon

**Agenda Review:** Reuben reviewed agenda with the group. A discussion of invoice format was added to flex items. There was also a request to revisit projects that funding partners had questions about during last month's funding meeting.

**Approval of Minutes from Meeting of July 27, 2013:** A motion was made to approve, seconded and carried. The minutes were approved as written.

**2013 HPC Project Funding:** Reuben reviewed the list. There was a discussion regarding 13-301 Mingus Mountain #11. The project would benefit both mule deer and elk. Funding should be  $\frac{3}{4}$  mule deer tag and  $\frac{1}{4}$  elk

tag. A motion was made to fund the project for \$55,184, which was then seconded and passed. In Unit 20B, 13-605, Morgan City catchment was not funded. However, 13-604 All Day catchment was only funded for apron replacement (\$8K) at last month's funding meeting. A motion was made, seconded and passed to fund it for the full amount requested - \$25,914.

**Contingency fund for elk:** After the project funding meeting last month, \$400,000 remained unobligated from the special elk tag fund. An idea was put forward by the internal funding committee for a block of funding to be put aside for new proposals. Brian explained that the idea was proposed to both elk groups (AES and RMEF) and both were on board. The group then received a handout which was a list of potential elk projects from Steve Rosenstock, and another from the Forest Service. Concern was expressed that not everyone knew about this plan and that it seemed to be allowing for out of cycle projects. It was explained that these additional proposals were not going to be considered as out of cycle, but would still fall within this current cycle. Steve Clark suggested prioritization and a laundry list from each region – projects that complement previous projects. Shovel-ready, drought related projects should be highest priority. The group agreed on a deadline of March 15, 2014 for submission of proposals. The Department will work collaboratively with the two elk funding partners to determine which projects will be funded this year. Decisions will be made by May 1, 2014.

**Funded project for this cycle:** A motion was made, seconded and passed to approve list of projects funded this cycle.

### **HPC Program Updates**

- **Special Tag Funds and Non-Federal Match Dollars**  
Reuben handed out and explained a new form that will be sent to all project proponents whose projects were funded. He explained how the Department would like to be able to use any unmatched special tag funds as match to the extra Pittman-Robertson Act funding they will receive this year. Tag funds, which are state money, cannot be counted as match if project proponents are already using them as match for other federal grants. The form is for information only and in no way precludes proponents from using their special tag funds for match against other grants. Contact Reuben if you have comments, concerns or suggestions about the form. The form will be available electronically. The form is for projects funded in this 2013 cycle, not past projects.
- **Dissemination of HPC Project Completion Reports**  
Reuben was pleased to report that his hounding has resulted in the program being nearly caught up with outstanding project completion reports. Reuben asked for suggestions from the group as to how they would like to see the reports disseminated. It was suggested that an email and handout at summer meeting would be good info to pass on to people who support at ABGSR, banquets, conventions, etc. The Department has started having a booth at conventions to showcase and market the tags, including out of state, and competes with other states for the bidders and raffle ticket buyers. It was suggested posting the reports to the web page, going back 4 years. It should also include a link to the project proposal and include interim reports for multi-year projects. This will also help groups to see what projects that have been re-submitted after being declined in past years. These comments are included in proponent letters.
- ***“Partners in Wildlife Habitat Conservation”* Video**  
Reuben showed the video, and acknowledged the fine work of David Majure and Carol Lynde from the Department's Information Branch in creating it. The group was very pleased with the video. The [video](#) is available here.

**Landowner Relations Program: Andy Clark**

Andy gave his presentation emphasizing the importance of partnerships. There are now landowner relations specialists in every region. Landowner incentives are not always necessarily money related. Andy took questions at the end of the presentation and explained the prioritization process in making awards.

**2-Year Review of Arizona HPC Charter:** Reuben led charter discussion. It's been open for comment for several months and as yet, no feedback has been received. Is everything still applicable? Reuben fixed a few minor errors. The Fredonia HPC, which had been inactive for the past few years, has been re-formed as the Arizona Strip Habitat Working Group. The group was represented at today's meeting by Luke Thompson. Another change will be the removal the word "grant", as the HPC program is not a formal granting program, but is a financial assistance program. Reuben asked the group if they'd like to continue looking at it. This will be the last opportunity to do so and suggested changes need to be submitted to him by March 15, 2014. Draft changes will be incorporated and it will be posted again and be ratified at the summer meeting.

**Project Proposal Instruction Manual:** The document is a supplement to the charter. There is a change reminding proponents that project funding is not to be used for administrative or overhead costs. There is a need to define what components of a project constitute "overhead." (Department archaeologist, University overhead, other related items.) It was suggested this should be outlined in MOUs and collection agreements.

**Game Branch and Development Branch Updates**

- Game Translocations  
Brian briefed the group on Unit 15D to Unit 16AS sheep transplant, the reintroduction of bighorn sheep into the Santa Catalina Mountains, and the recent pronghorn captures. (41 pronghorn from Cimarron NM and 8 from the Prescott area to the Rose Tree Ranch in Region 5). The Catalina bighorn sheep population will be supplemented next year with animals from Units 22 and 24B. The Department has not moved Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep this year, but are currently baiting on the Morenci Mine to prepare for capturing animals that will be moved to South Fork. Region 5 will be capturing Gould's Turkeys this week in exchange for the New Mexico pronghorn (up to 60 turkeys over 3 years).
- New Designs for Wildlife Water Developments  
Joe Currie made the presentation, explaining the new polyethylene troughs, gutters, and tanks that will replace fiberglass. Joe explained process of contracting and the procurement rules that govern it. Aprons will remain the same as currently installed.

**HPC Habitat Enhancement and Wildlife Management Priorities for the 2014 Cycle:** Reuben asked the group to review the HPC priorities document on the website, which are the guiding principles. Brian explained how we want to identify areas where we need the greatest improvements. Brian also explained the Department initiatives for use of the new hunt application fees. The areas of focus for the funding will be access and habitat. Details are forthcoming. Habitat projects for quail and other small game should generate real and measurable benefits. Please provide comments by March 15, and priorities will be determined by May 1, 2014.

**Local HPC and NGO Reports and Success Stories:**

Steve Clark for Arizona Elk Society (AES): Steve reported that there will be another work project the first week of May at the Buck Springs allotment.

Steve Sams for National Wild Turkey Federation: The group accomplished a lot of little projects in cooperation with other organizations, including several water projects. It was also pointed out that Steve Sams received the Hero Award from Field and Stream (national recognition). Other projects are working on access in Frye Mesa, and the PERP (Pinaleno Ecosystem Restoration Project) in Region 5.

Tom Mackin for Coconino Sportsmen: The ongoing Region 2 waters maintenance project saw work done on 69 developments, with volunteers working with AES. The Kaibab National Forest provided access to trick tanks. This was the 17<sup>th</sup> year for the O&M project on the Pat Springs Pipeline, which included the addition of 5 additional storage tanks. Thirteen thousand acres have been restored on Ida and White Hills, with a goal of continuing at the rate of 2,000 acres per year.

Stephen Williams for Forage Resource Study Group: Stephen thanked the groups for funding in the Bar T Bar grass release, treating the re-invasion of brush, which is an ongoing process, using new technology in equipment. Antelope movements are happening. The area had 13 inches of rain this past summer, but a very dry winter.

Darren Tucker for Prescott HPC: The Department continues to work with the Boquillas. As for access, hunters now have limited or seasonal access. The HPC is working with several ranches in Central Arizona Grasslands Conservation Strategy area. Other projects in progress include a tank cleanout on the LO Ranch and the Yavapai Ranch. They are also partnering with the Prescott National Forest fuels reduction program on prescribed burns. The Forest Service's Public Service Announcements mention AGFD's contribution on burns.

Luke Thompson for the Arizona Strip Habitat Working Group: Formerly the Fredonia HPC, this group is back under the umbrella of the HPC. They held their first meeting in September and are trying to move in a new direction to increase participation, using a core team model and re-engaging private landowners. A lot of HPC projects were done in the last 10 years. NEPA has been started on 4 BLM Paria Plateau water projects. Eight new developments will be proposed for Units 13A&B. There are already 8-10 shovel-ready Landowner Relations Program projects.

Mike Godwin for the Springerville-Alpine HPC: The USFS antelope collaring project took place in September near Big Lake. The study has been able to identify 2 corridors and the Department is already coordinating with ADOT on fencing. Fence maintenance has been an issue on upper elevation wetlands and the project completed by the White Mountain Youth Conservation was completed this past summer. The region has 15 bighorn sheep camera sights that are salted. New trail cams provide enough detail to be able to identify individual animals. Springerville Ranger District is planning to burn 25-30,000 acres, possibly this spring.

Bill Masters for the Springerville-Alpine HPC: – Bill briefed the group about the White Mountain Stewardship group and the plan for the USFS's 4 FRI project to thin an additional 20,000 acres. There was also a discussion about working with ADOT on wildlife friendly fencing on state highways.

John Tuter for the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF): 2014 marks the 30th anniversary of RMEF. The group's Project Advisory Committee will make approximately \$200,000 available for Arizona this year, some for youth activities. The Arizona Special Elk tag will be auctioned at their banquet in Tucson on March 1<sup>st</sup>. They will also be working on an Adopt-A-Ranch program with the O'Haco Ranch.

Glen Dickens for the Sierra Vista-Douglas HPC and Arizona Antelope Foundation (AAF): All the HPC's project proposals were approved for HPC funding this year. They are working on several landscape-level projects with the Coronado National Forest. The AAF is involved with the Big Lake pronghorn project, the I-40 pronghorn connectivity project, and a Youth in the Outdoors project at Sonoita Plains, funded by a National Fish and Wildlife foundation grant. Eight kids monitored prairie dogs and modified fences.

Bob Birkeland for the Winslow and Show Low HPCs: The Railroad juniper grinding is completed, thanks to good partnership with USFS. ASU students were given a tour of the project area. Dirt tank cleaning is complete in Unit 3C and tanks are full. Forest maintenance in the Rodeo-Chediski burn area did not take place, even though the Forest Service got a grant for it. Black Mesa and Lakeside ranger districts don't have archaeologists, which is slowing down compliance work. It is evident that simply thinning trees is not effective for deer habitat - they need fire.

Chirre Keckler for the Kaibab National Forest: Chirre thanked group for funding their projects. They've had \$75,000 from the forest and other partners for grassland restoration. Volunteers from Arizona Elk Society and Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation have been helping with maintenance on existing waters. The Forest burned 2,700 acres at Government prairie and have seen a good pronghorn response. The 4 FRI plan includes corridors for pronghorn.

National Wild Turkey Federation: A lot of good projects are coming up this year.

Dave Daniels for the Payson Natural Resources Committee: The Reservation Boundary project is done, replacing 8 old drinkers. The first phase of Potato Butte juniper clearing is also done, and Phase 2 is approved for the next year.

Beth Humphrey for the Apache Sitgreaves (A-S) National Forests: 4 FRI is coming to the A-S and they are starting the second Environmental Impact Statement for some bridge projects. Moving into a restoration framework means they will be doing landscape-scale NEPA. The Larsen Restoration project NEPA is finishing up. Combined budgets from all the Forest programs (range, timber, waters, wildlife, livestock) each set aside \$5,000 to partner with others on projects. Springerville and Lakeside Ranger Districts are conducting burns right now.

Joe Currie for AGFD Development Branch: Joe thanked the group. Development Branch is short staffed this year, but they are in the process of getting an on-call contractor in place for building catchments.

Velma Holt-Buhr for the Kingman HPC: The HPC is having a hard time re-forming. One of the Region 3 Wildlife Managers is working with Mohave Flood Control District (MFCD) to develop catchment water level monitoring device with remote sensors. Mohave Flood Control District is willing to fund half of them (10). The data is uploaded via satellite and MFCD will monitor and maintain. Joe Currie mentioned that the Department has 3 of these sensors, funded by the Wild Sheep Foundation. The device also measures rainfall.

Duane Aubuchon for the Safford HPC: On the Fry Mesa Road, NWTF, MDF, RMEF and Yamaha purchased access. There have been no burn windows as yet for the Aravaipa and Galiuro burns. For the Jackson Cabin spring development project, the Southeast Arizona Sportsmen are providing volunteer labor. The Pinaleno Ecosystem Restoration Project (PERP) has been contracted out by the USFS and NWTF. A lot of work is getting done in the Mount Graham area. For the Bonita Grasslands, 3 phases are complete - this year's is phase 4. The

goal for the Bonita project was for 20,000 acres of grassland restoration, and about 12,000 is complete - mostly mesquite removal. One landowner completed 900 acres on his own.

Terry Herndon for the Mule Deer Foundation: MDF is partnering with NWTF on the Sycamore Mesa fence modification, and with AAF and NWTF fence removal in Unit 19B. The group is also working in Unit 37B, with an emphasis on the importance of youth recruitment as conservationists. They will also be working on Twin Buttes catchment in Tonto Basin in March. MDF participated in youth camps, including a muzzleloader camp in Unit 16A, and another in Wickenburg. The group is looking for projects to be involved in all year long. They partnered with NWTF on the purchase of 2 fence rollers. One is housed at the Flagstaff office and is available to whoever needs to use it.

### **Flex Items:**

**Invoices and Audits:** The Department will be undergoing an audit in the near future and is likely to get scrutiny on invoicing. Invoices for HPC project funds should have some detail about actual expenditures (miles, materials) Reuben also reminded everyone to read the “Congratulations, your project was funded” document that lays out the process on the website. (Attached at the end of this document).

Please email any items for the agenda of the next state HPC meeting. At the funding coordination meeting last month, a suggestion was made to invite representatives from the USFS and BLM to conduct presentations on cost share for NEPA and archeological surveys – so the HPC can have a better understanding of where it fits in the project process. It was also suggested to have a presentation or discussion on the pros and cons for the use of chemical application treatments on trees and woody vegetation on USFS lands.

The Coconino NF Wilderness plan up is open for comments until March 20. [Forest plan info can be found here.](#) The plan will address wilderness designations and access restrictions, as well as restrictions on recreational shooting.

Reuben pointed everyone to the Land and Habitat update on the HPC website.

It was suggested that this group take a serious look at wildlife waters and that a large pot of money is needed because most of the catchments in the state, apart from any newly renovated, are in the 30-60 year old age range.

### **Date and Time of Next Meeting:**

Saturday, July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2014. The date is tentative depending Commissioner Davis’ schedule. The location will most likely be Flagstaff. Reuben will notify everyone with the confirmed date and location.

The meeting adjourned at 1:20 PM.

Action items to be completed by **March 15, 2014:**

- **Proposals Requested from the Local HPCs / Regions for High Priority and “Shovel Ready” Elk Projects.**
  - This decision was made due to the amount of Special Elk Tag \$ currently available (about \$300,000) following review and approval of proposals submitted in the 2013 HPC funding cycle. With the understanding that this is not a normal HPC process, the State

HPC agreed that funding should be allocated to high priority projects ASAP and not be carried forward to the next funding cycle.

- Proposals submitted will be evaluated collaboratively between the Department, Arizona Elk Society, and Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation with funding decisions made by May 1<sup>st</sup>.

- **Arizona HPC Charter & Project Proposal Funding Manual**

- In 2011 the State HPC made a motion to review the Charter every 2-3 years. Minor edits are clarifications are currently being evaluated, and comments or edits from the Local HPCs and Regions are requested.
- In addition to the Charter, the supplemental project proposal funding manual is also open for comment. The major edit being added to that document is a clarification statement that administrative overhead will not be an eligible expense for the use of Special Big Game License Tag funds.

- **2014 HPC Priorities for Habitat Enhancement and Wildlife Management**

- In 2011 a priorities guidance document was developed to help project proponents in the development of HPC project proposals. This document is updated every year, and contains information from Department management plans with input from various wildlife conservation organizations.
- While most actions described are general in nature, additional input is requested for management actions or priorities that are more focused at the landscape or Game Management Unit level (e.g. Ida Grassland/Irishman Dam Grassland restoration; management actions supplementing 4FRI, Southeast Arizona grasslands restoration; Central Arizona grasslands restoration; etc.)

All pertinent documents for review and comment are attached in Microsoft word. Please send all comments related to these documents to my attention at [rteran@azgfd.gov](mailto:rteran@azgfd.gov). If you have any questions please contact either myself or Brian Wakeling, and thank you for your assistance.

## **CONGRATULATIONS!**

### **Your Habitat Partnership Committee (HPC) Project Proposal was funded with Special Big Game License Tag Funds.....**

#### **What You Need To Be Aware of to Get Your Funded Project Implemented:**

- Funds can be used for any and all goods and services needed for your project, apart from AGFD personnel time. The only exception to this is for interns.
- Special Big Game Tag License Tag funds are state funds, and as such, expenditures of these funds are subject to all requirements of compliance including, but not limited to: state procurement law, registration of vendors into the state procurement system, use of state contracted vendors where applicable, Department environmental compliance (EA checklist where applicable), and landowner, stewardship or collection agreements.
- All administrative and environmental compliance requirements need to be fulfilled BEFORE work begins on the project. Please be advised that this process can sometimes take several weeks. It's never too early to begin this process, so please plan accordingly.
- Any vendor or entity receiving payments must register as a vendor with the State of Arizona in the state's procurement system, **Procure.az.gov**.
- When you receive notification that your project was funded, contact the Game Branch for information on how to proceed.

#### **Projects in Coordination with Federal Agencies (Forest Service, BLM, Etc.):**

- These typically require a collection agreement or challenge cost share agreement.

#### **Projects in Coordination with a Landowner or Permittee Who Will Be Doing the Work:**

- These typically require a landowner or stewardship agreement.

#### **Projects that will be undertaken by the Development Branch:**

- Coordinate with Joe Currie or Ed Jahrke and they will handle the details and let you know what they will need from you.

#### **Projects in which the Department is purchasing materials only for volunteer or permittee / landowner labor:**

- Goods and services required for the completion of your project must be purchased from state contracted vendors if we have one, or, the competitive bids process. Please call Ruth Gregory to get this process started as far in advance of actual project implementation as possible.

**Now - All That Being Said, the Process Is As Follows:**

1. Secure any necessary agreements
2. Contact the appropriate AGFD work unit to requisition funds. This could either be Game Branch, Development Branch, Research Branch or the Regional office. The necessary agreements **MUST BE** in place in order to requisition the funds. Once a requisition is processed, a purchase order will be generated notifying the vendor that it's okay to proceed.
3. Once job is done, vendor will send AGFD an invoice to be paid. These should be sent to the work unit that requisitioned the funds, who will then process them for payment. The work unit that processes the payments will contact the project proponent and to verify that the work was performed as proposed and is completed.
4. Proponent should then complete a project completion report and submit to the Game Branch within 30 days of project completion.

**Under no circumstances should any work be undertaken, especially by private landowners or permittees until agreements are fully executed and the funds requisitioned.**

This may require you to educate your customers about the procedures we are required to follow to remain in compliance with state laws. Skirting the process may result in delayed vendor payments and a lot of extra work on your part. It's also illegal.

While it may seem complicated, a little advanced planning and coordination is all that's necessary. Your first contact should be **Ruth Gregory (rgregory@azgfd.gov)** and she will help get you started.

- Ruth Gregory Game Branch (623) 236-7349
- Reuben Terán Game Branch (623) 236-7350
- LouAnn DeHart Funds Planning (623) 236-7521
- Al Eiden Landowner Relations (623) 236-7624
- Ed Jahrke Development Branch (623) 236-7482
- Joe Currie Development Branch (623) 236-7867
- Robert Schoepe Support Services Procurement (623) 236-7457

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE AND BEST OF LUCK WITH YOUR PROJECTS!**