

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

PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Title: Slate Mountain Pronghorn Habitat Restoration-Part 3 & Cedar Ridge Turkey Roost Improvement

Project No. 09-205

Region/GMU: Region II/GMU 7

HPC: Williams/Flagstaff

Project Type: Removal of young Ponderosa and Juniper trees from historic open grassland habitat and a turkey winter roost site.

Project Description:

This project is a continuation of a 2006 HPC project to remove encroaching ponderosa pine and juniper trees from historic grasslands on 865 acres east of Slate Mountain. Approximately 500 acres were cut in June 2007 and an additional 225 were cut in May/June 2008 by CREC (Coconino Rural Environmental Corps). Unfortunately, the total project area is still not complete. NEPA and Archeological clearances are complete on the remaining approximate 200 uncut acres. Additionally, the CO Bar Ranch (Babbitt Ranches) has agreed to fund the cutting of an additional 300 acres to extend the current boundary east to tie into the 2006 thinning project and north into a new area along Highway 180. This part of the area is to have NEPA and Arch clearances by spring 2010 (personal communication with Coconino National Forest). Chainsaw crews will be used to lop and scatter tree carcasses as needed. At this time there is no other area on the Coconino National Forest in Unit 7 that is cleared to cut trees for pronghorn.

Part 2 of this project involves going back to a 2004 HPC project to cut young Ponderosa trees that prevent use of mature Ponderosa trees at a turkey roost site. The project occurred prior to my time in Unit 7 and for some reason not all blocking trees were cut during the earlier project. This should not take more than a day of hand crew time and will cut all remaining young trees that block turkey use of the mature trees. Not all the young trees will be cut as some will be left as replacement trees if they are currently not blocking access. This site is about 2.25 miles from the Slate Mountain site and is of short duration, so thus the decision to include this in the Slate Mountain project. This site also has completed NEPA and Archeological clearances.

Wildlife Species to Benefit: Pronghorn, Elk, Turkey, Mule deer

Possible Funding Partners:

Implementation Schedule:

Beginning: Summer 2010

Completed: Summer 2010

NEPA Compliance: (if applicable)

Completed: Yes (partial) ___ No ___

Projected Completion Date: Late Spring 2010

PROJECT FUNDING

SBG Funds Requested: \$16,250 (2.5 weeks CREC crew time)

SBG Funds Spent ('07 & '08): \$24,750

Cost Share Funds: \$11,055 Forest Service (of which \$5,470 is new \$\$ for fiscal year 09/10 to clear additional acreage)

\$ 2,000 AGFD

Total Project Costs: \$54,055 (total since 2006)

PLUS 300 acres Babbitt Ranches will clear as cost share

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION	
Applicant: Carl Lutch, Wildlife Manager GMU 7 Telephone: 928-526-9128	Address: AZ Game and Fish Dept. 3500 S. Lake Mary Road Flagstaff, AZ 86001
AGFD Contact and Phone No. (If applicant is not AGFD personnel)	
Coordinated with: Cary Thompson, Wildlife Biologist, US Forest Service Billy Cordasco, Ranch Manager, Babbitt Ranches	Date: various times from 2005 to present
Applicant's signature:	Date:

SEND COMPLETED APPLICATIONS TO:
Game Branch
5000 W. Carefree Highway
Phoenix, AZ 85086
 Email proposals to Ruth Gregory at rgregory@azgfd.gov

WAS PROJECT PRESENTED TO THE LOCAL HPC? YES ___ NO X___

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

Yes. This project was submitted and funded in the 2004, 2006 and 2007 HPC cycle. In 2006, \$8,250 was funded and in 2007, \$16,500 was funded. Time needed to complete the project was underestimated due to rockier than expected soil around the tree bases and inexperienced CREC crews in 2007 slowed progress even more. The additional acreage outside of the 2006 project area was submitted in 2008 (the portion Babbitt Ranches has agreed to fund), but was not funded. Coconino National Forest staff projects to complete the expanded project area NEPA by spring 2010 (which is the Babbitt Ranch portion).

NEED STATEMENT/PROBLEM ANALYSIS:

As stated earlier, part of this proposed project was submitted and funded in 2006 and 2007. No more than 200 acres remain uncut on the original Slate Mountain project. Additionally, my knowledge of the area has increased and an additional 100 acres to the east would tie in well with grassland bottoms and with a 2005 HPC tree thinning project in that area. Also, Babbitt Ranches is interested in expanding this project to the north with an additional 300 acres along both sides of Highway 180. Babbitt Ranches has agreed to fund the additional acreage outside the original project boundary area in a cost share. It is unclear the cost estimate for their portion as they will complete the cutting for that area. Babbitt Ranches estimates it will be less than the estimated \$6,500 estimate under state contract. Also, the trees in that area are predominately young Ponderosa Pine which is less expensive to cut than juniper. As stated earlier, the NEPA and archeological clearances are not complete for this additional 300 acres, but is to be completed by spring 2010. NEPA clearance when complete will be for hand crews only. Mechanical NEPA clearance other than hand crews was financially too expensive for the Coconino National Forest to complete at this time. If needed that kind of clearance can be added in the future. This project is identified as a high priority area in the Unit 7 Pronghorn Management Plan and is within known pronghorn fawning and elk calving habitat. Thinning is needed to increase visibility for pronghorn, improve forage and maintain movement corridors.

As stated in the "Project Description" part 2 involves going back into a 2004 HPC project and removing remaining young Ponderosa trees blocking access into older mature Ponderosa trees for wintering turkey. For some reason not all the blocking trees were removed in the earlier project. Total acres to be cut at this site is 1-2 acres. The National Wild Turkey Federation was contacted to help fund this part of the project. I did not receive a response back from them. If funding from them can be secured then total cost will be less than the asked for amount.

These two sites are the only two having both NEPA and Archeological clearances for cutting trees on the Coconino National Forest in Unit 7. They are both close to one another, involve cutting trees to improve the habitat and are not large projects, so the decision was made to combine them into one project and finish them.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

- Enhance and restore the integrity of historic grasslands by removing encroaching Ponderosa Pine and Juniper trees to improve the productivity of grasses and forbs.
- Improve the quality of Pronghorn habitat by improving visibility.
- Providing connectivity between areas of identified and occupied Pronghorn habitat within a larger area of use.
- Remove remaining young Ponderosa trees blocking access to the lower limbs of mature Ponderosa trees at a winter turkey roost site.

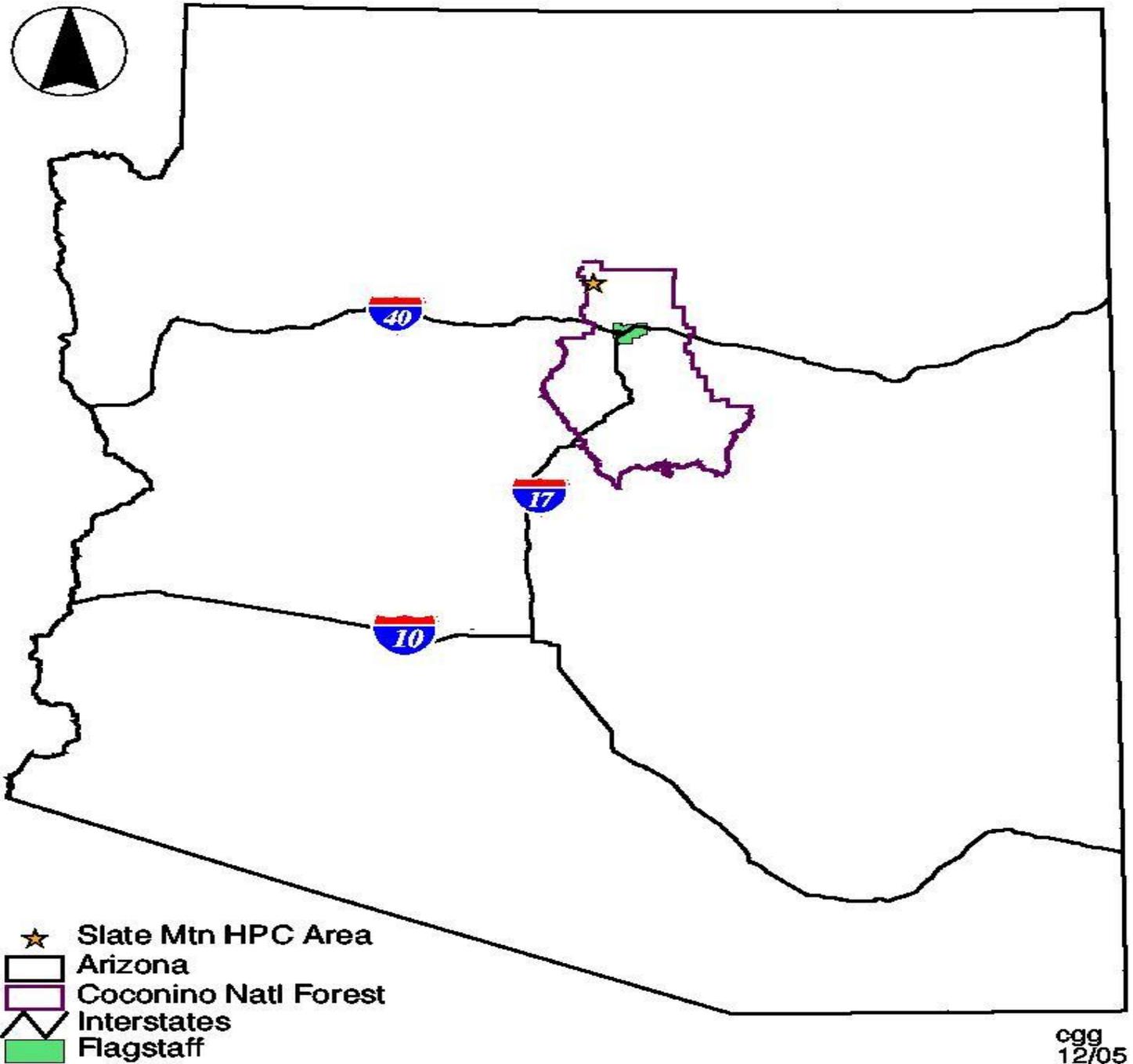
PROJECT STRATEGIES:

Utilize chainsaw crews to lop and scatter encroaching Ponderosa Pine and Juniper trees from historic grassland habitat within the Slate Mountain project area and cut young Ponderosa Pine trees in the Cedar Ridge turkey roost area. Treatment is expected to be concluded in two weeks for the original project areas and an additional 3-4 weeks for the expanded area being funded by Babbitt Ranches. Any unused funds would be returned to the funding source to be use on other projects. Forest Service guidelines for the Highway 180 Scenic Highway corridor will be followed, i.e., lop and scatter cut trees to not be seen from Highway 180 or relocate cut trees away from Highway 180.

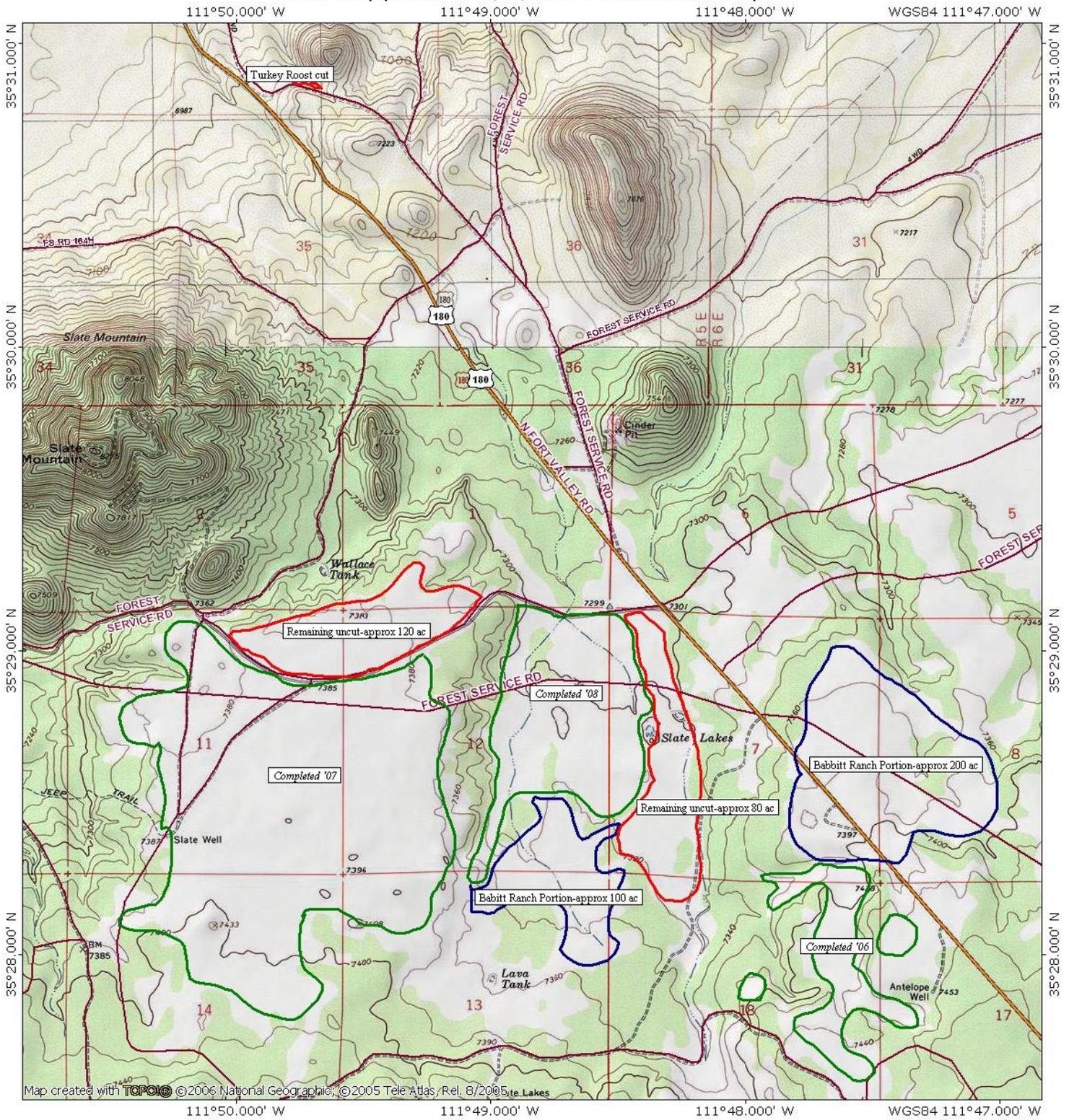
PROJECT LOCATION:

Approximately 20 miles northwest of Flagstaff, AZ; north and east of Slate Mountain and on the Kendrick Mountain quadrangle. Project is adjacent to and both north and south of Highway 180. Refer to the enclosed maps.

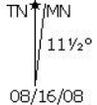
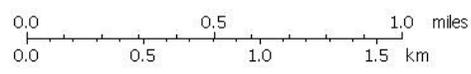
SLATE MOUNTAIN PRONGHORN HABITAT RESTORATION 12/2005



TOPO! map printed on 08/16/08 from "Slate Lakes cuts.tpo"



Map created with TOPO! ©2006 National Geographic, ©2005 Tele Atlas, Rel. 8/2005



Map of Slate Mountain Project area showing past and future cut areas.

Green=completed **Red=remaining uncut/asked for in this application** **Blue=Babbitt's cost share**

(revised 7-02-2007)



Slate Mountain Project area at the junction of FR 191 & FR 9021H. Uncut area on left and '08 cut area on right.



Cedar Ridge Project area. Note young Ponderosa Trees continuing to block access into some of the lower branches of the mature Ponderosa Trees. Rim rock area in fore ground is where turkey launch into the older trees to roost.

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

Coconino National Forest, Peaks Ranger District.

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

N/A

HABITAT DESCRIPTION:

Habitat within the Slate Mnt project area is high elevation historic grassland habitat surrounded by a Ponderosa Pine forest. Habitat at the Cedar Ridge project is Ponderosa Pine in a canyon with rim rock where the turkey fly off the rim rock into the lower branches of the mature Ponderosa. The elevation at project sites is approximately 7,400 feet.

ITEMIZED USE OF FUNDS:

SBG Funds Requested '09 (hand crew for 2.5 weeks)

Prior SBG Funds utilized in '07 & '08

Through 6/08

New for 09/10

\$16,250

\$24,750

Cost Share Funds:

Babbitt Ranches- funding for 300 acres

????

Forest Service

Archaeology clearance

\$310

\$ 620

Silvicultural prescription

\$615

\$ 620

Public scoping

\$1,200

\$1200

Biological clearances and NEPA documentation

\$3,460

\$3030

AGFD - Project design/layout/fieldtrips; admin of CREC contract; implementation/supervision; submission of final report

\$1,200

\$800

Total Project Costs:

\$31,535

\$22,520 (plus Babbitt Ranch cost share)

LIST COOPERATORS AND DESCRIBE POTENTIAL PARTICIPATION:

See above

PROJECT MONITORING PLAN:

Monitoring will occur 1-2 years post treatment to detect resprouting and/or regeneration of trees.

PROJECT MAINTENANCE:

Volunteer and/or Forest Service fire crews will be utilized to lop any resprouting and/or missed trees/branches to maintain the integrity of the project site.

PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT TO BE FILED BY:

Carl Lutch, Unit 7 Wildlife Manager, AZ Game and Fish Department