

**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. 09-212

Region/GMU: Region II, GMU 5A

HPC:

Project Type: Renovations of existing water sources on Buck Springs Allotment

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. One component needed to accomplish this strategy is to ensure the availability of dependable water outside these meadow/riparian areas. This will draw large mammals up from the sponge meadows/riparian areas into the upland habitats and help evenly distribute the elk population. With reduced use, the now dry meadows will be restored to natural sponge meadows and with functional downstream riparian communities. The improved water distribution will benefit many species, including the Federally-listed Little Colorado River spinedace.

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:

Beginning: July 1, 2010

Completed: June 30, 2012

NEPA Compliance: (if applicable)

Completed: Yes ___ No ___

The Arizona Elk Society has agreed to work cooperatively with the Forest Service and will complete those steps needed to be fully compliant with all environmental laws/regulations prior to taking any action on this grant.

Projected Completion Date:

PROJECT FUNDING

SBG Funds Requested: \$ 10,000

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.

Total Project Costs: \$10,000.00

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

Applicant: Steve Clark, President, Arizona Elk Society
(please print)

Telephone: 602-8850835

Address: PO Box 190
Peoria, AZ 85380

AGFD Contact and Phone No.

(If applicant is not AGFD personnel)

Coordinated with: Arizona Game and Fish Department, Forest Service, Arizona Deer Association	Date: 2008/2009
Applicant's signature:	Date:

SEND COMPLETED APPLICATIONS TO:

**Game Branch
2221 W. Greenway Rd.
Phoenix, AZ 85023
mdisney@azgfd.gov**

WAS PROJECT PRESENTED TO THE LOCAL HPC? YES X NO

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. One of the key limitations in achieving functionality in the headwater sponge meadows that are so important from an ecological standpoint is uneven distribution of grazing ungulates due to poor distribution of dependable water sources. A key point in this project is that there are several existing water sources that have been built primarily for livestock watering that have been adversely impacted over time as silt and other debris has markedly reduced tank capacity rendering them as ephemeral water sources in all but the highest precipitation years. This project proposes to identify 5 key existing dirt tank water sources that need to be rehabilitated to improve ungulate distribution.

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 key ecological components is the headwater sponge meadows that once existed in the area but have largely become dry, upland meadows. When these meadows were more functional, they acted as sponges, holding water which in turn flowed into streams and provided important riparian habitat for the plethora of species that call this region home. This project will help with the restoration of sponge meadows which in turn will restore a more natural stream flow. This project will directly benefit many species by improving the riparian habitat.

One of the commitments that the Arizona Elk Society made to the neighboring livestock grazing permit holders was that they would work cooperatively with the Forest Service and the Arizona Game and Fish Department to maintain or enhance waters within the area of the Buck Springs allotment to eliminate the need for elk to move to other allotments to obtain dependable water sources. The Forest Service has agreed that this is a priority issue for the Buck Springs allotment but this action was not covered by the FEIS on the Buck Springs allotment. The AES recognizes the need to ensure environmental compliance actions are taken prior to beginning actual improvements and are prepared to work cooperatively with the FS to ensure all legal requirements are met.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

Improving existing dirt tanks on the uplands of the Buck Springs Allotment will help distribute wildlife more evenly throughout the allotment. This will reduce the use of the riparian areas and sponge meadows by large animals such as mule deer and elk and help in restoring the meadows natural functions.

PROJECT STRATEGIES:

Five dirt tanks located on upland areas that have reduced water capacity will be chosen for renovation. Heavy equipment will be used to reduce the silt load, reseal the bottom for better water retention, and perform maintenance to the earthen dam, diversion ditch, and spillway that creates the water source.

PROJECT LOCATION:

Five existing dirt tanks identified by the AZGFD local Wildlife Manager, AES, and US Forest Service on 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. One of the key ecological components of this area is the headwater sponge meadows that once existed in the area but have largely become dry, upland meadows.

ITEMIZED USE OF FUNDS:

AZ Elk Society estimates the cost of renovation using one of their contractors at \$2000.00 per tank. All funds secured through this funding request will be used to hire contract operators to rehabilitate the five tanks as outlined herein.

LIST COOPERATORS AND DESCRIBE POTENTIAL PARTICIPATION:

US Forest Service for potential tank clearance. Arizona Game and Fish Department in the selection of the waters to be rehabilitated. The Arizona Deer Association may share in funding of this project.

PROJECT MONITORING PLAN:

AZGFD and 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