

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

Game Branch / HPC Project Number: 18-201

PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Title: Northern Arizona Grassland Initiative (NAGI)

Region and Game Management Unit: Region 2 Units 6A, 6B, 7, 8, 9 and Region 3 Units 10 and 18A

Local Habitat Partnership Committee (LHPC):

- Flagstaff/Williams

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[] → **Funded HPC Project #(s):**

Project Type: combination of tree removal, prescribed burning and water development

Brief Project Summary: If funded this project will be part of a project where NRCS, USFWS, AGFD, and the Special tag fund provide \$3 million in funding to put toward pronghorn antelope habitat restoration.

Big Game Wildlife Species to Benefit (% benefit per species) :

Implementation Schedule (Month/Day/Year):

Project Start Date: July, 2017

Project End Date: June, 2022

Environmental Compliance:

NEPA Completed: Yes[] No[X] N/A[]

Projected Completion Date: Will vary depending on funding source

State Historic Preservation Office - Archaeological Clearance:
(Provide Attachment)

Yes[] No[X] N/A[]

Projected Completion Date: Will vary depending on funding source

Arizona Game and Fish Department EA Checklist: N/A[]

To be Completed by: Joe Currie, Steve Cassady, Wade Albrecht

Projected Completion Date: Will vary depending on funding source

PROJECT FUNDING

Special Big Game License Tag Funds Requested:

\$350,000 over 5 years (\$70K per year)

Cost Share or Matching Funds:

\$ 1,150,000 over 5 years

Total Project Costs:

\$ 3,000,000 over 5 years

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

Applicant (please print):
Steve Cassady/ Wade
Albrecht

Address: 5000 W Carefree Highway,
Phoenix, AZ 85086

E-mail: scassady@azgfd.gov
walbrecht@azgfd.gov

Telephone: 928-214-1270

Date:

AGFD Contact and Phone No. (If applicant is not AGFD personnel):

Project has been coordinated with: Steve Clark (AES), Glen Dickens (AAF), Coconino NF, Kaibab NF, Larry Phoenix, NRCS Flagstaff Field Office, ASLD, Steve Cassady, Wade Albrecht

NEED STATEMENT – PROBLEM ANALYSIS:

In Arizona, an estimated 2/3 of grasslands have been adversely impacted by disruption of natural fire regimes, invasions of woody vegetation and noxious weeds, and conversion to other land uses. The degraded status of grassland/savannah ecosystems within the project area were outlined in AGFD's 2012 Arizona State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) along with declines in species such as pronghorn antelope, Gunnison's prairie dogs, black-tailed prairie dogs, western burrowing owls, Ferruginous hawks, and other grassland-obligates. Pronghorn are of particular concern, due to ongoing declines over historic population levels and the high social and economic values associated with the species. For federal (USFS) lands within the project area, Forest Plans for the Coconino, Kaibab, and Prescott National Forests identified grasslands and woodlands that are outside their natural range of variability and no longer provide high-quality wildlife habitat.

Ongoing drought and climate change are additional stressors to these arid ecosystems, reducing availability and function of natural water sources, and placing additional demand on man-made systems needed to sustain wildlife populations. Lack of water is a limiting factor for pronghorn in most remaining Arizona grasslands and also limits several bat species, Northern leopard frogs, Chiricahua leopard frogs, and other species of concern. The aforementioned USFS plans also identify the need to ensure sufficient and appropriately distributed water sources for wildlife.

Unlike other factors, woodland encroachment and inadequate water supplies can be addressed through management intervention. The primary objective of this proposal over the five year grant period is to restore 30,000 acres of degraded rangeland habitat invaded by woody vegetation. If treatments are located strategically, we can also restore connectivity to high quality rangeland habitats and reduce fragmentation. The secondary objective is to provide reliable water for all wildlife species on over 150,000 acres of rangelands. Ensuring effective water distribution will provide significant wildlife benefits and also help agricultural producers manage rangeland sustainably through rotational grazing and other management techniques.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

1. Restore 30,000 acres of grassland and savannah habitat.
2. Provide and/or ensure reliable water on 150,000 acres of grassland habitat
3. Facilitate connectivity along 20 miles of transportation corridors that can impair wildlife movements.

By achieving the objectives of this proposal, all the partners will have changed the landscape by addressing 4 limiting factors for grassland-obligate wildlife species. This proposal addresses food and cover through the on the ground restoration of grassland habitat, and enhances water availability from development of new sources and renovation of existing waters. The fourth limiting factor, habitat fragmentation, will be addressed by the retrofitting of existing fences or placement of new wildlife-permeable fencing and strategically placing restoration treatments focusing grassland restoration work proximate to high quality habitat or clustering projects together to create landscape level grassland treatments that eliminate fragmentation due to invading woody vegetation.

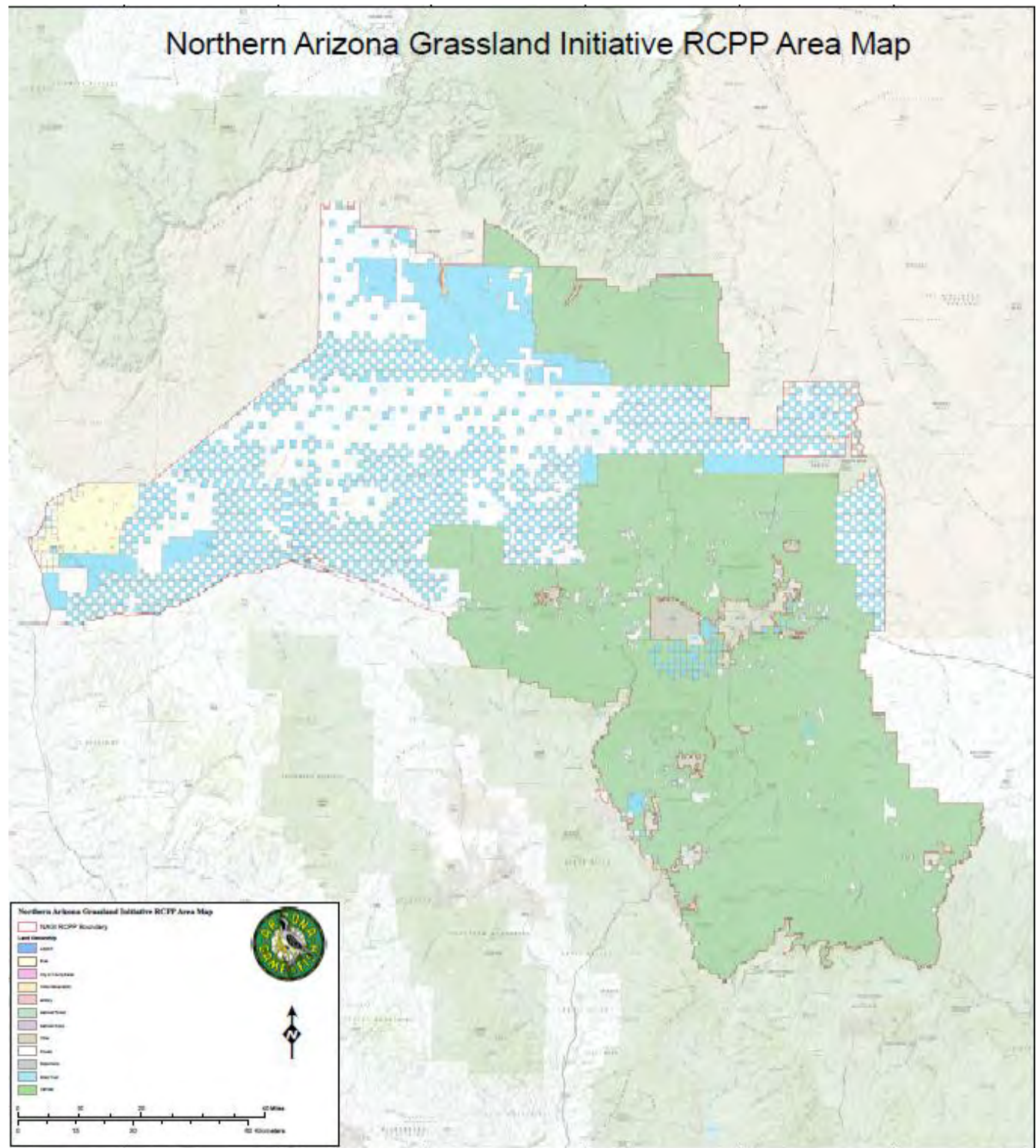
PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND STRATEGIES:

This is a long term proposal that is seeking funding over a 5 year timeframe. If this proposal is successful, the funding will be used as part of a multi-agency proposal that will direct NRCS funding and AGFD funding to complete habitat restoration for pronghorn antelope in the project area. AGFD staff, including Steve Cassady and Wade Albrecht will coordinate the planning and coordination between Forest Service, NRCS, lessees, the water development program within the Department, and other partners to maintain or create new wildlife waters in the project area, conduct prescribed burns, and remove invading trees to restore grasslands. Selection of the specific locations and acreage to be completed with this funding and the funding from the Department and NRCS will be made as the project moves forward. Selection of specific projects will begin once funding through NRCS and this proposal is secured. AGFD staff will coordinate with the appropriate agencies and work with the lessees and landowners to apply for funding through NRCS, and the AGFD project lead to fund specific projects over the next 5 years. Annual progress report will be provided to the local HPC and interested Conservation Organizations and agency partners.

PROJECT LOCATION

(Please provide lat/long of project area and datum. If project is larger than one point, please add multiple lat/long points or an existing shapefile of the project area)

See map below, shapefile can be provided upon request.



LAND OWNERSHIP AT THE PROJECT SITE(S):

(If the project area is private property, please state specifically and provide the landowner's name)

- Private, State and Forest Service

IF PRIVATE PROPERTY, IS THERE A COOPERATIVE BIG GAME STEWARDSHIP or LANDOWNER AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE LANDOWNER AND THE DEPARTMENT?

YES[There will be one once final projects are selected] NO[] N/A[]

HABITAT DESCRIPTION:

Overall challenges to habitat in the focus area include juniper invasion into grassland that is resulting in conversion of habitat types. Juniper invasion into grasslands has resulted in overall loss of suitable habitat, loss of forage, and reduced ability of pronghorn antelope to migrate to optimum habitat. Vegetation information can be found within the Department's HabiMap (<http://www.habimap.org/>).

ITEMIZED USE OF FUNDS: A more specific breakdown of the Budget, and the completed project proposal for the NRCS cost share funds will be provided upon request.

Special Big Game License Tag Funds

\$350,000 (\$70,000 per year for 5 years) for grassland restoration or water developments located within the project area

Cost Share or Matching Funds (for volunteer labor rates please refer to the worksheet below)

AGFD Landowner Relation's Program \$950,000 (\$190,000 per year) for grassland restoration, prescribed burns and livestock/ wildlife drinkers

NRCS \$1,500,000 (\$300,000 per year) for grassland restoration, prescribed burns and livestock/ wildlife drinkers

USFWS Partners Program \$200,000 for grassland restoration and prescribed burns

Landowner/Lessee \$200,000 (\$40,000 per year) as cash or in kind match/ labor for brush treatments, prescribed burns and livestock/ wildlife drinkers

NRCS \$150,000 (\$30,000 per year) for NEPA and cultural compliance

AGFD \$100,000 (\$20,000 per year) for NEPA and cultural compliance

USFWS Partners Program \$50,000 (10,000 per year) for NEPA and cultural compliance

LIST COOPERATORS AND DESCRIBE POTENTIAL PARTICIPATION:

Arizona Game and Fish Department is the lead partner on this proposal.

The Flagstaff/Williams HPC has been presented with this proposal.

The Forest Service is a federal agency with a long history of working with producers through grazing leases on FS controlled lands. These leases are critical to the producers within the geographic area of this proposal as much of the rangeland in the focal area is FS controlled lands leased for cattle grazing.

The ASLD (Arizona State Land Department) is a state agency a long history of working with producers through grazing leases on FS controlled lands. These leases are critical to the producers within the geographic area of this proposal as most of the rangeland in the focal area includes at least some ASLD controlled lands leased for cattle grazing.

The Coconino NRCD is a local conservation entity with a strong history of working with producers on priority issues related to agricultural producers within the focus area of this proposal.

WOULD IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS PROJECT ASSIST IN PROVIDING, MAINTAINING, OR FACILITATING RECREATIONAL ACCESS?

YES[] NO[] N/A[X]

PROJECT MONITORING PLAN:

To determine the desired outcomes of improved grassland habitat and improved water availability, AGFD will use ongoing annual aerial counts of pronghorn fawns to detect changes in reproduction. Reproduction is directly related to habitat conditions, so if we can document an increase in pronghorn reproduction we can say we have improved grassland habitat for grassland dependent wildlife, which is one of the primary objectives of this grant. To determine if the grassland vegetation is responding, a vegetation monitoring protocol will be established for each restoration project during the conservation plan development. This monitoring will be conducted by the producer, NRCS staff, or AGFD staff to document changes in vegetation in the treated areas. AGFD staff will compile the monitoring data and provide GIS models and written documentation on the outcomes for wildlife and vegetation at the end of the five year grant period.

To determine the desired outcome of improved habitat connectivity, AGFD will use surveys of pronghorn antelope, direct observations along movement corridors, and radio-telemetry data obtained from collared pronghorn.

Progress will be reported annually and will provide the number of acres restored, funding allocated to projects, location map, and a summary of the monitoring data. A final report that includes GIS models of both the habitat improvements and the monitoring data, summary of the outcomes of the project, and a summary of the benefits of this proposal on wildlife habitat will be provided at the end of the grant period.

PROJECT MAINTENANCE:

For department water catchments, the department will be responsible for maintenance. For all other projects funded through this proposal and the associated funding proposal for NRCS, project maintenance will be the responsibility of the landowner or lessee and this requirement will be a stipulation in each agreement with a landowner or lessee.

PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT TO BE FILED BY:

Steve Cassady (Region 2) or Wade Albrecht (Region 3), AGFD

WATER DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS (please use the worksheet below):

As specific water developments are selected over the course of this project, Steve Cassady or Wade Albrecht will ensure the worksheet below is completed and coordination with the water development section is completed before funding is allocated.

TREE CLEARING/REMOVAL PROJECTS (please use the worksheet below):

As specific tree removal projects are selected over the course of this project, Steve Cassady or Wade Albrecht will ensure the worksheet below is completed before funding is allocated.

ATTACHMENTS:

(Please provide cultural clearance documentation from land management agency, e.g., FONSI,

Inventory Standards, etc. Also attach any project pictures)

ARIZONA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT **WATER DEVELOPMENT WORKSHEET**

PROJECT TITLE: _____

- 1) **Is the water development listed as a priority in the most recent “Wildlife Water Development Annual Implementation Schedule?”**
- 2) **Please list the Development Branch personnel and date coordinated with for this project.**
- 3) **What is the estimated annual inches of precipitation for the area? (mark one)**
☐2-4 ☐4-6 ☐6-8 ☐8-10 ☐10-12 ☐12-14 ☐14-16 ☐ >16
- 4) **Is there a perennial water source available to big game within four miles of this project?**

YES ☐ (please complete #5 below) NO ☐ (skip #5 below)
- 5) **For the accessible, perennial water source nearest this project:**
Name of water source:
Type of water source (catchment, spring, dirt tank):
Ownership of water source:
Distance in miles from project:
- 6) **Is the target wildlife species a result of transplant efforts?** YES ☐ NO ☐
- 7) **Please list any special land management status for the project site (i.e. Wilderness, National Park, National Monument). If private land, list landowner.**
- 8) **Please provide the following information about access to the proposed site:**
Type of access (mark one): ☐2x4 vehicles ☐4x4 only ☐foot only**

**If foot access only: Distance in miles: _____ Approximate hiking time: _____

-- Does access to this site require crossing private or tribal lands? YES ☐ NO ☐

-- Please describe any restrictions to public access:
- 9) **Please list below (or on a separate sheet) the material type and dimensions of each component proposed to be added, modified, or repaired.**
- 10) **Was a site visit completed?** Yes ☐ No ☐
If Yes, please list personnel that attended and date.

ARIZONA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT TREE CLEARING/REMOVAL WORKSHEET

PROJECT TITLE: _____

- 1) What is the estimated acreage of the project?**
- 2) How are the trees going to be cleared? (agra axe, chain saw, grubbing, push, chaining):**
- 3) What is the estimated number of trees per acre?**
- 4) Describe trees to be cleared (species, estimated diameter, single stem, multi-stem):**
- 5) Describe terrain (slope, soil type, rocks)**
- 6) Please list any special land management status for the project site (e.g. Wilderness, National Park, National Monument). If private land, list landowner.**
- 7) Please provide the following information about access to the proposed site:**
Type of access (mark one): ☐ 2x4 vehicles ☐ 4x4 only ☐ Foot only**

**If foot access only: Distance in miles: Approx. hiking time:

Does access to this site require crossing private or tribal lands? YES ☐ NO ☐

Is the site relatively accessible for tree removal equipment? YES ☐ NO ☐

Please describe any restrictions to public access:

ARIZONA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

VOLUNTEER HOURLY RATES AND CLASSIFICATIONS WORKSHEET

PROJECT TITLE: _____

The value of volunteer labor should be calculated at the hourly rate of an employee doing similar work, or using hourly rates from the Arizona Department of Administration's Human Resource web site, plus a standard ERE rate of 35%. http://www.hr.state.az.us/ClassComp/CC_Job_Titles_with_Ranges.asp

\$0.445/mile should be the calculation used for mileage.

Water Development	Volunteer Hours	Volunteer Miles	Hourly Rate	Estimated Value
			\$14.14	
Habitat Restoration and Clean Up	Volunteer Hours	Volunteer Miles	Hourly Rate	Estimated Value
			\$14.14	
Fisheries	Volunteer Hours	Volunteer Miles	Hourly Rate	Estimated Value
			\$14.14	
Nongame Branch Project	Volunteer Hours	Volunteer Miles	Hourly Rate	Estimated Value
			\$14.14	
Misc/office work	Volunteer Hours	Volunteer Miles	Hourly Rate	Estimated Value
			varies	
Community Services	Volunteer Hours	Volunteer Miles	Hourly Rate	Estimated Value
			\$7.44	
Events and Other	Volunteer Hours	Volunteer Miles	Hourly Rate	Estimated Value
			\$14.14	
Research Branch	Volunteer Hours	Volunteer Miles	Hourly Rate	Estimated Value
			\$14.14	
Wildlife Area Hosts	Volunteer Hours	Volunteer Miles	Hourly Rate	Estimated Value
			\$17.44	
Education Programs	Volunteer Hours	Volunteer Miles	Hourly Rate	Estimated Value
			\$16.07	
Totals				