



**SB 1441 Wildlife Habitat Restoration and Enhancement Fund**

**SEMIANNUAL REPORT  
July 2007**

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**I. Executive Summary**

Laws 2006, Chapter 372, (Senate Bill 1441 wildlife habitat restoration and enhancement fund; appropriation) requires the Arizona Game and Fish Commission to submit a semiannual report on the work, goals, objectives and funding of the wildlife habitat and restoration enhancement fund. The study must be submitted to the Governor, President of the Senate, Speaker of the House of Representatives, chairpersons of the Senate and House of Representatives Appropriations Committees and a copy of the report provided to the Secretary of State and director of the Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records.

SB 1441 appropriated \$3,500,000 to the wildlife habitat restoration and enhancement fund to be spent by the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) as administered by the Commission. The bill was effective September 21, 2006 and monies received from the General Accounting Office October 19, 2006. Projects outlined in the bill are as follows:

1. Anderson Mesa grassland restoration.
2. Kaibab winter range habitat improvement.
3. Yuma region water redevelopments.
4. Wildlife water redevelopments north of the Colorado river.
5. Pinetop region deer habitat restoration projects including the Chitty Creek habitat restoration project, the Pigeon Creek habitat restoration project, and the Sheep Wash ecosystem improvement project.

<b>Project</b>	<b>Dedicated Funding</b>	<b>Expenditures to Date</b>	<b>Remaining</b>
Anderson Mesa	\$649,552	\$44,164	7%
Kaibab	\$376,125	\$139,470	63%
Yuma	\$50,000	\$747,209	0%
North of Colorado River	\$750,000	\$749,517	0%
Pinetop Region	\$920,180	\$153,694	83%
Swing monies awaiting dedication	\$54,143	\$0	100%
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$3,500,000</b>	<b>\$1,934,054</b>	<b>45%</b>

## II. Project Work, Objectives and Goals

**Project Title:** Anderson Mesa Grassland Restoration

**Project Work, Objectives and Goals:** This project plans to improve 10,000+ acres of wildlife habitat through use of Agra-axe, grinder, chainsaw, seeding, herbicide, wetland fencing, and burning. Archeological surveys will be completed to authorize treatment for over 15,000 acres of federal lands. All work in the Anderson Mesa area is a continuation of projects on the Coconino National Forest, State and private land complex, Flying M Ranch, and Bar T Bar Ranch, collectively known as the "Diablo Trust." This work is being performed primarily to benefit pronghorn antelope.

Since the last reporting period, the Diablo Trust, with assistance from the Department, received a \$450,000 grant from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) as match for SB 1441 funds. So far we have completed the archaeological surveys and awarded contracts for treating another 5,590 acres and to fence one wetland. Bids are being solicited for additional juniper treatment and wetland fencing.

TASK DESCRIPTION	REPORTING DATE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Completed 1,097 acres of treatment</li> <li>- Awarded archaeological survey contracts</li> </ul>	December 2006
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Completed U.S. Forest Service programmatic agreement with State Historic Preservation Office</li> <li>- Completed archeological surveys</li> <li>- Completed stewardship agreement with Diablo Trust</li> <li>- Awarded contract to Arizona Wildlife Federation for fencing Camillo/Pine wetland</li> <li>- Received Natural Resources Conservation Service \$450,000 grant to the Diablo Trust</li> <li>- Treatment for another 5,590 acres begun</li> <li>- 700 acre burn completed with remaining 300 acre burn in progress</li> <li>- Post-burn seeding in progress</li> <li>- Bids solicited for additional juniper treatment and wetland fencing</li> </ul>	June 2007

**Funding:** Expenditures to Date (06/07/07): \$144,164

Dedicated Funds: \$649,552

**Project Title:** Kaibab Winter Range Habitat Improvement

**Project Work, Objectives and Goals:** This project will improve mule deer habitat on approximately 6,800 acres of a 24,000-acre deer habitat restoration project through use of Agra-axe, grinder, chainsaw, re-seeding, and herbicide treatments. Archeological surveys will be completed on an additional 4,300 acres in preparation for juniper push renovation.

At this time, we have nearly 9,300 acres surveyed for cultural resources and 6,500 acres of this cleared for work.

From October – December 2007, approximately 500 acres will be seeded with browse (shrub) species and treated with herbicide to control cheatgrass. Within this seeded acreage, Northern Arizona University and the Forest Service Rocky Mountain Research Station will establish monitoring plots under a grant from the Natural Resources Conservation Service Grazing Land Conservation Initiative to evaluate the impacts and success of this project.

TASK DESCRIPTION	REPORTING DATE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Completed archeological surveys for 5,000 acres</li> <li>- Completed archeological clearance for 2,500 acres</li> </ul>	December 2006
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Completed archeological surveys for 4,300 acres</li> <li>- Completed archeological clearances for another 4,000 acres</li> <li>- Completed 500 acres of juniper push renovation grinding</li> <li>- Browse/shrub seeding planning underway</li> </ul>	June 2007

**Funding:** Expenditures to Date (06/15/07): \$139,470      Dedicated Funds: \$376,125

**Project Title:** Region IV (Yuma) Water Redevelopments

**Project Work, Objectives and Goals:** This project will redevelop existing wildlife water developments that are either in a state of disrepair and not functioning as designed, or were originally designed with inadequate water storage to sustain use by wildlife between rainfall events. Over time, these catchments have become water-hauling liabilities (both monetarily and manpower resources) for the Department.

Department personnel established a priority list of water developments as candidates for redevelopment. Priorities were based upon wildlife use/need, water-hauling liability, and practicality of obtaining the necessary environmental compliance documentation within

established construction timelines. In Region IV, there were 35 projects originally scheduled for completion; however, actual construction costs have shown these initial plans to be overly ambitious.

Since the last reporting period, SB 1441 funds allocated to this project have been fully expended to support redevelopment of 28 water catchments in Region IV (Yuma). Various sportsmen clubs such as the Yuma Rod and Gun Club also contributed resources and manpower.

TASK DESCRIPTION	REPORTING DATE
- Originally identified 35 redevelopments	December 2006
- Completed 28 water redevelopments	June 2007

**Funding:** Expenditures to Date (06/15/07): \$ 747,209      Dedicated Funds: \$750,000

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**Project Title:** Region II (North of the Colorado River) Water Redevelopments

**Project Work, Objectives and Goals:** In Region II four new catchments and 36 water redevelopments were originally identified as priorities for completion. Similar to Region IV (Yuma), selection was dependent upon wildlife use/need, water-hauling liability, and practicality of obtaining the necessary environmental compliance documentation within established construction timelines.

Since the last reporting period, work to restore 15 water catchments has been completed. It is expected that a remaining eight redevelopments and the four new developments will be finished by July 31, 2007. As in Region IV (Yuma), available SB 1441 funds were insufficient to purchase materials and labor for all 40 catchments initially selected: a total of 27 water projects will be completed in Region II.

TASK DESCRIPTION	REPORTING DATE
- Originally identified 36 redevelopments and 4 new water catchments	December 2006
- Completed 15 water redevelopments	June 2007

**Funding:** Expenditures to Date (06/15/07): \$ 749,517      Dedicated Funds: \$750,000

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**Project Title:** Pinetop Region Deer Habitat Restoration Projects

**Project Work, Objectives and Goals:** This project plans to restore approximately 48,400 acres of deer habitat within three landscape level project areas: Chitty Creek, Pigeon Creek, and Sheep Wash in southern Game Management Unit 27 on the Clifton Ranger District, Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests. The Chitty Creek project will improve 15,200 acres and the Pigeon Creek project 21,000 acres through the application of prescribed fire and vegetation thinning. Sheep Wash restoration, an ongoing project involving three geographic areas of focus in a 31,000 acre ecosystem area, will receive funding to initiate the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process and provide for the implementation of woodland thinning to improve 13,400 acres of deer habitat specifically in woodland grasslands and Ponderosa pine stringer canyons. Although improving deer habitat is the primary purpose for SB 1441 funding, many other wildlife species including elk, bear, turkey, Mexican spotted owl, and potential Gila trout habitat as well as participating livestock permittees, will benefit from the successful implementation of these projects.

**Chitty Creek** restoration involves treatments along the Mogollon Rim. Understory thinning has been planned for over 900 acres of summer range in both Ponderosa pine and Spruce fir habitats, and prescribed fire on 14,000 acres in all summer and winter habitats. Thinning has been ongoing using other available funding sources. East Eagle grazing permittees have been very supportive in resting the project area pre- and post-treatment and this action has resulted in reduced revenue from livestock sales over a three year period. Chitty Creek habitat restoration work could not be conducted without the support of these permittees.

Since the last reporting period, the 1,200 acre Strayhorse block, originally planned as a separate undertaking predominately consisting of pine burning, has been added to this project. Because most of the Chitty Creek holding resources involved keeping fire out of the Strayhorse block, its recent addition should help reduce project costs. Because treatment objectives are essentially identical for these two areas, keeping fire out of the Strayhorse was deemed unnecessary. Phase I prescribed burning in mixed conifer/Ponderosa pine (8,000 acres) is scheduled for October 2007. Phase II prescribed burning in woodland shrub habitat (6,000 acres) is planned for April 2008.

**Pigeon Creek** restoration involves application of prescribed fire on approximately 21,000 acres to reduce tree and shrub canopy, reinvigorate shrub species, and stimulate herbaceous production. Approval was also granted for natural fire use at a landscape scale of up to 36,000 acres. A Pigeon Creek grazing permittee helped initiate the restoration effort by agreeing to remove all livestock and allow for fine fuels buildup and applied fire. In addition, the permittee refurbished 16 earthen tanks and has obtained grants for reconstruction and new construction of fencing to improve livestock management when the allotment is restocked after recovery.

Since the last reporting period, approximately 20 miles of black line, equal to about 1,200 acres of burned area, was completed during May 2007. Aerial ignition began on June 5, 2007. Despite unusual spring rains and other weather events, results have been very good where ignitions have occurred. Due to the mosaic nature of the burn it is estimated that approximately 11,000 acres have been treated thus far. It is anticipated that burning of 19,000 total acres will be complete by August 2007.

**Sheep Wash** restoration involves the entire subunit watershed on four allotments: Pigeon, Mesa, Double Circle, and AD Bar/Hog Trail. Funding from SB 1441 will enable NEPA analysis of two separate areas for mechanical thinning in various forest and woodland habitats and some landscape level treatments. Treatment implementation originally planned to begin April 2007, will not commence until April 2008 in order to fulfill Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) requirements. The Sheep Wash project is separated into three focus areas, Mallett (Upper Sheep Wash), Mesa (middle), and NO Bar (lower Sheep Wash). A significant amount of restoration work on the Mesa portion of Sheep Wash has been on-going since about 2000. All grazing permittees are and remain very supportive of restoration efforts, and clearly understand the benefits of resting from livestock grazing for full restoration recovery.

Since the last reporting period, planning for Four Bar Pasture has been completed. Scoping as well as watershed and fisheries specialist reports have also been completed for NO Bar. Most field work is complete and NEPA NO Bar planning should be finished by early fall 2007. Thinning of a total 20,000 acres will begin April 2008 after the Chitty ecosystem burn scheduled for October 2007. The Mallett allotment NEPA planning and decision should be available by June 30, 2008.

TASK DESCRIPTION	REPORTING DATE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prescribed fire treatments were planned and on the verge of implementation in October 2006, but significant (3'+) rainfall closed the window for effective burning thereby requiring postponement of Phase I prescribed burning.</li> </ul>	December 2006
<p><b>Chitty Creek:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Completed prescribed burning for slash pile removal (300 acres)</li> </ul> <p><b>Pigeon Creek:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Completed NEPA planning and decision</li> <li>- Completed black lining burn (1,200 acres)</li> <li>- Completed prescribed burn (11,000 acres)</li> </ul> <p><b>Sheep Wash:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Completed Four Bar Pasture NEPA and decision</li> <li>- Completed scoping, watershed, and fisheries reports for NO Bar</li> </ul>	June 2007

**Funding:**

Chitty Creek Expenditures to date:	\$ 0	Dedicated Funds: \$ 460,253
Pigeon Creek Expenditures to date:	\$ 135,000	Dedicated Funds: \$ 280,662
Sheep Wash Expenditures to date:	\$ 18,694	Dedicated Funds: \$ 179,265
<b>Total Expenditures to Date (06/07/07):</b>	<b>\$ 153,694</b>	<b>Dedicated Funds: \$ 920,180</b>