

3. Maintain auditable project records and files.

All 1992 and 1993 projects have been closed; the project files are undergoing archive processing. Auditable files for the 1994 through 1997 external IIPAM projects are maintained and updated by the Heritage Grants and Donation Funds Supervisor. These files are housed in Game Branch.

4. Prepare, publish, and present annual performance reports and other professional and popular publications on activities and results under this Job.

The Annual Work Plan, Heritage Program Annual Performance Report, this report, and contingent intra-Departmental reporting completes this activity for the FY96-97.

JOB 2: STEWARDSHIP

A. Objective: Maintain and enhance wildlife habitat on private and public lands.

B. Approaches and Activities:

1. Develop stewardship agreements with private land owners and land management agencies to enhance wildlife habitat, wildlife populations, and other sensitive elements.

- a. Nine stewardship projects were implemented this year. In addition, the Arizona Habitat Partnership Committees (HPCs) continued to provide a forum for public involvement in identifying big game habitat management concerns and recommending solutions before these concerns become problems. A new local HPC was established in Kingman, bringing the total number of active HPCs to nine. At the June meeting of the statewide HPC, 40 proposed projects were prioritized for funding with proceeds from big game special tags and big game license donations.

Habitat Branch assisted Regional and Game Branch efforts to develop stewardship agreements by: coordinating legal review of draft agreements by the Assistant Attorney General to ensure compliance with appropriate laws and regulations, and review of draft agreements through the Department's Environmental Assessment Checklist process for compliance with natural resource and cultural resource laws and regulations; presenting draft agreements to the Arizona Game and Fish Commission for review and approval; and drafting final agreements.

Region I personnel coordinated with many private landowners to discuss the potential for habitat enhancement projects through the Stewardship Job. As a result, five stewardship agreements were finalized, and another one was renewed for three years. Elk special tags proceeds funded purchase of seed and fertilizer for these agreements, which allow continued elk access to more than 1500 acres of private pasture. Progress on the Hi-Point Well/O'Haco agreement included installation of a generator and engineering for a 100,000 gallon storage tank. The Arizona Water Protection Fund awarded a grant of \$78,000 to help fund the High Point project. Regional personnel also continued testing electric fence as a device to protect private land resources (e.g. irrigated pastures, crops, orchards) from big game impacts. A video describing the project was produced for the *Arizona Wildlife Views* television series. Other activities in Region I included providing PVC pipe for elk crossings and salt to private landowners and grazing permittees on public lands to reduce impacts by elk on fences and livestock salting areas. Regional personnel, other agency personnel, and private volunteers installed more than 100 PVC pipe elk crossings.

In Region II, a stewardship agreement avoided construction of an elk-proof fence that would have been a barrier to elk movement adjacent to a golf course. The agreement enabled construction of a fenced corridor so elk could continue movement through the area without damaging nursery stock on the private land.

In Region III, seven dirt tanks that provide big game water in Game Management Unit 17 were sealed with bentonite to improve storage capability. Cost-share participation from Cross-U Ranch and the Prescott Habitat Partnership Committee enabled timely completion of the project before winter rain filled the tanks. A collection agreement with Prescott National Forest enabled transfer of \$4000 in pronghorn special tag funds for the Cienega controlled burn. Three new water developments were completed in Game Management Unit 10 for mule deer, elk, and bighorn sheep using special tag funds. Special tag funds administered through the Stewardship Job also supported a telemetry study and infra-red sensing survey of the elk herd in the Hualapai Mountains.

In Region IV, a stewardship agreement to protect sensitive riparian habitat was developed with Tres Alamos Ranch, Yavapai County. The agreement involves fencing a spring and road closures. Another agreement provided a seasonal food plot for migratory game birds in Yuma County.

In Region V, we completed a well, storage tank, and pipeline for the Rosewood Tank project, which included development of a perennial water source to protect leopard frog habitat. IIPAM funding also continued to support development of waterfowl habitat improvement projects for two farms in Cochise County. The Region also coordinated with Habitat Branch and Game Branch to continue development of a stewardship agreement with property owners adjacent to Cluff Ranch.

In Region VI, collection agreements were finalized with the Payson Ranger District, Tonto National Forest, for Mesa, Walnut, Horse, Butcher, Pine, and Dry Dude burns. Two of the burns were implemented on 2000 acres and the others are scheduled for completion during winter 1997-98. Elk special tag funds were also used for purchase of supplies for additional monitoring cages to be located throughout the Ranger District.

- b. In addition to Heritage funding, stewardship agreements developed under this Job were partially supported by Job 8, W-53-M funding through the Pittman-Robertson Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act.
2. We provided technical assistance to other agencies regarding habitat management techniques and, when appropriate, developed agreements through Arizona's Habitat Partnership Program and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Partners for Wildlife Program.
3. We administered master agreements with species-specific sportsman's groups, which receive Big Game Special Tags and update agreements. These agreements pertain to the activities addressed above.
4. We coordinated development and implementation of agreements and Big Game Special Tag projects with Development Branch and Field Operations staff.