

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

Game Branch / HPC Project Number: 15-507

PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Title: Pronghorn Fawn Enhancement—Allen Flat

Region and Game Management Unit: Region 5, Units 31/32

Local Habitat Partnership Committee (LHPC):

- Safford

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: Contract Hunter/Trapper -- Predator Control

Brief Project Summary: Hire an individual hunter/trapper to remove coyotes from primarily the Allen Flat area of Unit 32 to enhance pronghorn fawn survival. Due to wind and solar energy facilities, aerial removal is more difficult in this area. Operations would occur March through June to coincide with the pronghorn fawning season; the goal being a short, targeted predator removal effort during a critical time of the year to boost pronghorn fawn recruitment. This effort would occur for three consecutive years (2016-2018) while the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) continues with the Bonita Grasslands Habitat Restoration Project and completes a supplemental pronghorn translocation to these areas.

Big Game Wildlife Species to Benefit (% benefit per species) : Pronghorn (50%); Mule Deer (50%)

Implementation Schedule (Month/Day/Year):

Project Start Date:

March 1, 2016

Project End Date:

August 15, 2018

Environmental Compliance:

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

Projected Completion Date: _____

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

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

Projected Completion Date: _____

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

To be Completed by: Duane Aubuchon

Projected Completion Date: Near complete, needs signatures

PROJECT FUNDING

Special Big Game License Tag Funds Requested:

\$ 10,000/year for three years = \$30,000

Cost Share or Matching Funds:

\$ 1,500 1st year, \$1,000/year afterwards = \$3,500

Total Project Costs:

\$ 3,500

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

Applicant (please print):

Duane Aubuchon

Address: 555 N. Greasewood Rd.

Tucson, AZ 85745

E-mail:

daubuchon@azgfd.gov

Telephone: (520) 253-0400	Date: August 25, 2015
AGFD Contact and Phone No. (If applicant is not AGFD personnel):	
Project has been coordinated with: Arizona Antelope Foundation, local livestock operators.	

NEED STATEMENT – PROBLEM ANALYSIS:

During 1988 and 1989, a high of 55 pronghorn permits were issued each year. Since 1990 the number of permits has steadily declined to 7 permits this year. During the late 1980's, over 300 pronghorn were observed in Game Management Units (GMU) 31/32 during annual surveys. From 1995 through 2005, the average was less than 150. Since 2002, less than 90 animals have been observed annually, except in 2007 and 2008 where we observed 101 and 96 pronghorn, respectively. We believe this brief population increase was a result of aerial predator removal efforts from 2006-2008. Over the last 4 years, the average number of pronghorn observed during annual surveys has been 63. During the last 10 years, fawn to doe ratios have averaged 30:100, with 2010 through 2014 fawn to doe ratios averaging 24:100, illustrating the declining trend since the previous predator removal efforts. These trends all point toward the need for management action necessary to bolster and support this pronghorn population. The AGFD plans to translocate additional pronghorn into this area to address low pronghorn densities in the Allen Flat and East Sulphur Springs Valley sub-populations, and improve genetic diversity throughout. Concurrent with the translocation, coyote removal, which has proven effective within this focused area, will allow the pronghorn an opportunity to become established, successfully reproduce, and achieve management objectives for this population per the Unit 31/32 Management Focus Area Plan (AGFD 2015).

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

The project objectives include removing coyotes to benefit pronghorn and deer recruitment; increasing the abundance of pronghorn and mule deer in the Allen Flat area; expanding the current distribution of pronghorn and mule deer to occupy suitable habitat; providing diverse recreational opportunities to the public; and implementing comprehensive game management through landscape level planning. The project incorporates aspects of the Departments' Unit 31/32 Management Focus Area Plan, the Comprehensive Game Management Plan, and Strategic Plan-Wildlife 20/20.

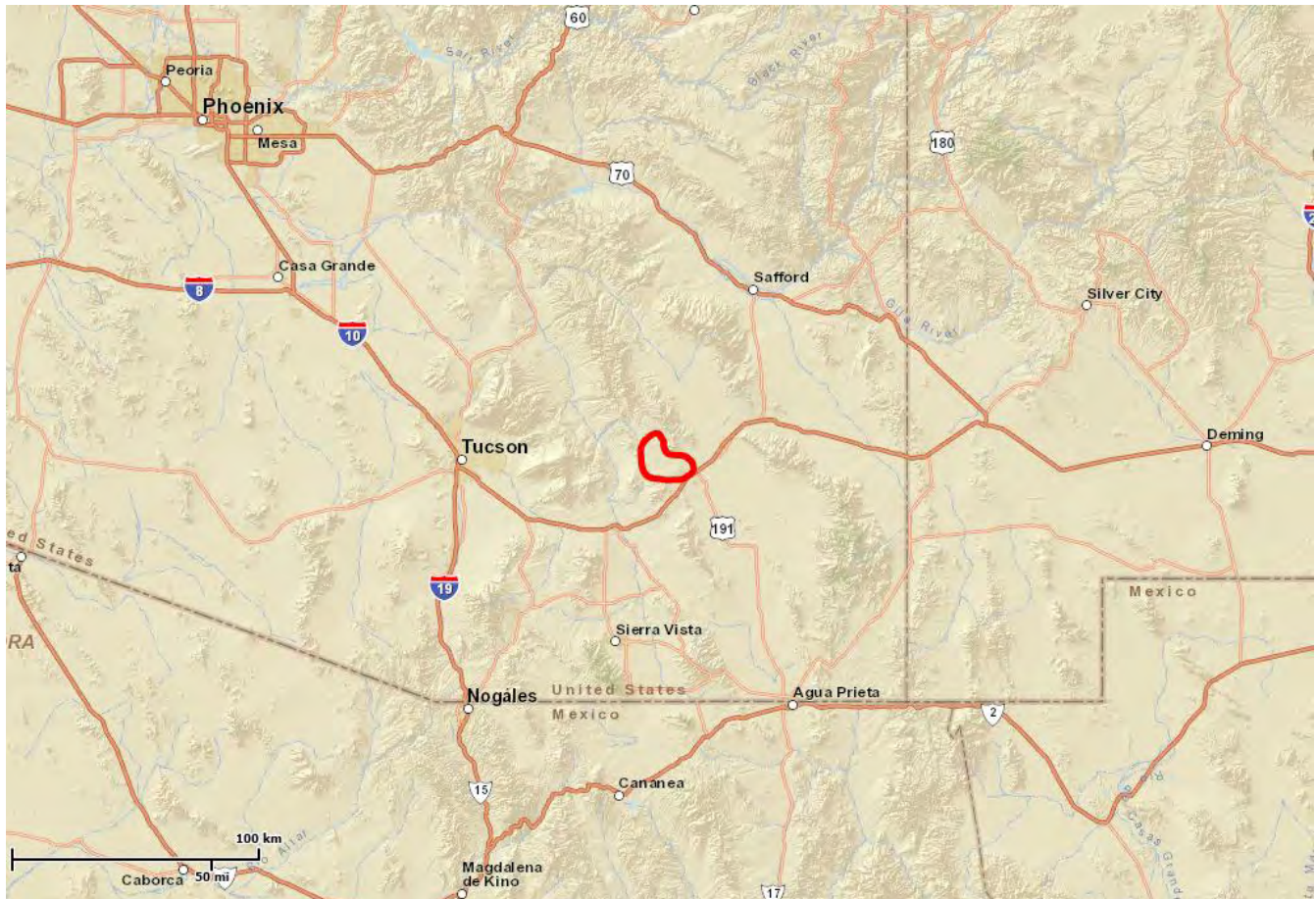
PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND STRATEGIES:

(How will you implement project)

To implement these objectives, the Department will hire a contract hunter to conduct predator removal operations in GMUs 31 and 32. The hunter would focus their efforts on removing coyotes in pronghorn fawning areas to reduce the coyote population and increase fawn survival. The emphasis area for the contract hunter would be the Allen Flat basin of GMU 32. This area has both solar and wind projects which can make aerial predator removal difficult. We anticipate the coyote hunting to occur during the months of March through June when pronghorn fawning takes place. A similar program in the Sonoita area with the same hunter yielded immediate and obvious benefits (greater pronghorn fawn recruitment and an increase in the pronghorn and mule deer populations). The funding request is for \$10,000 each year for three years, not all \$30,000 at once.

PROJECT LOCATION

(Please provide lat/long in decimal degrees of project area using datum WGS84. If project is larger than one point, please provide multiple lat/long points or an existing shapefile of the project area)



Map 1. Project Location

(32.3148, 110.10836; 32.2183, 110.19979; 32.09704, 110.04168; 32.1789, 109.97415)

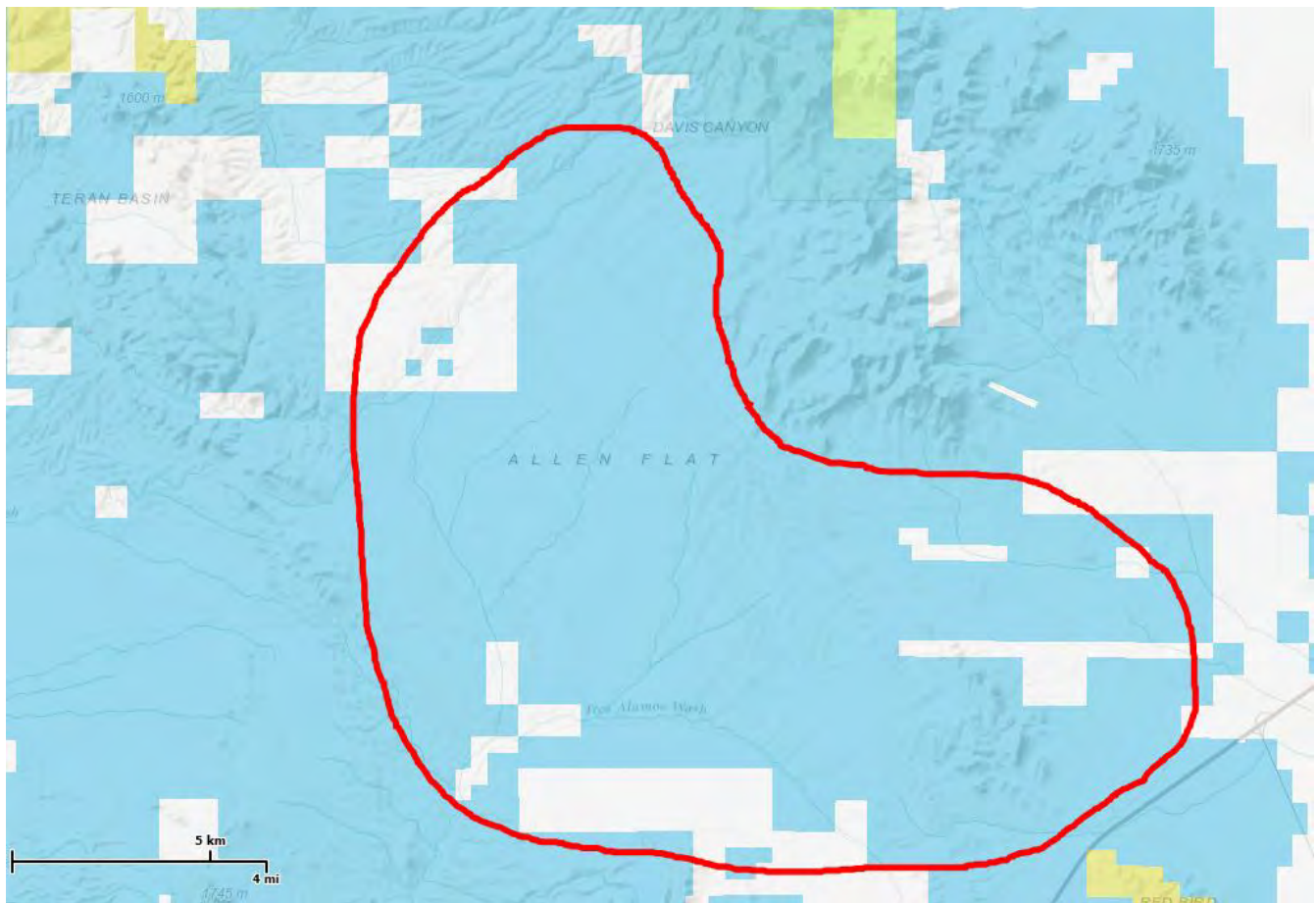
LAND OWNERSHIP AT THE PROJECT SITE(S):

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

- There are private landowners within the Allen Flat area, but the majority of the pronghorn habitat is on State Trust Lands. If the hunter or Department documents a need to remove coyotes on private lands, we will request permission to hunt private property from the landowner at that time.

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

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



Map 2. Land Ownership

HABITAT DESCRIPTION:

The Allen Flat area consists of approximately 152 sections (mi²) of semidesert grassland habitat. There are three ranch houses present in this area as well as a section of solar facilities and 18 wind turbines. The terrain is mostly flat with some high, rolling hills and elevations range from 4400' to 5200'. Vegetative cover is low in species richness, with areas of severe shrub invasion, mostly mesquite.

ITEMIZED USE OF FUNDS:

Special Big Game License Tag Funds

Use \$10,000 to hire a contract hunter to remove coyotes using firearms in the Allen Flat area from March to June (funds requested based on previous predator control efforts in the Sonoita area).

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

Matching funds of \$1,500 include salary for Department personnel to complete an Environmental Assessment Checklist for this project, field monitoring and coordination of the contract hunter/results.

LIST COOPERATORS AND DESCRIBE POTENTIAL PARTICIPATION:

Cooperators include the Arizona Antelope Foundation, the Mule Deer Foundation, and the Arizona Game and Fish Department (all possible sources of labor assistance); along with the Arizona State Land Department, the Three Links, Warbonnet, & Antelope Ranches (providing or potentially providing access).

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

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

Unrestricted public access is already available, but the project could help maintain access on private lands by facilitating partnerships and good will.

PROJECT MONITORING PLAN:

The contractor will be required to report the number of coyotes removed, dates and locations of harvest, sex of each coyote removed, and approximate age. The Department will monitor the effects on the pronghorn and mule deer populations through annual fixed-wing surveys. Standard summer pronghorn survey flights will be conducted to determine fawn to doe ratios, as well as the buck to doe ratios and total pronghorn observed. Winter helicopter, fixed-wing and ground surveys will be conducted to determine fawn to doe ratios for mule deer as well as total deer observed during and deer seen per hour of survey. These results will be published in annual performance reports highlighting the observed population and fawn recruitment/survival.

PROJECT MAINTENANCE:

None required.

PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT TO BE FILED BY:

Duane Aubuchon, Arizona Game and Fish Department

WATER DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS (please use the worksheet below):

n/a

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

n/a

ATTACHMENTS:

(Please provide cultural clearance documentation from land management agency, e.g., FONSI, Inventory Standards, etc. Also attach any project pictures)

n/a