

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

HPC Project Number:	20-207
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PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Title:	SO 3362 Big Game Winter Range and Migration Corridor Improvement: Slate Mountain and Boyd Knoll		
Game Management Unit:	GMUs 7 and 8	Region:	2
Local Habitat Partnership Committee (LHPC):	Was the project presented to the LHPC?		
Williams - Flagstaff HPC	Yes		
Project Location: (Please provide <u>lat/long</u> in decimal degrees or meters of project area using datum WGS84 or NAD83. If the project is larger than one point, please include them all. Provide an accompanying shapefile as an attachment for the project area).			
LATITUDE/NORTHING: Please see attached shapefiles and maps for project areas.			
LONGITUDE/EASTING:			
MULTIPLE LOCATION COORDINATES: Please separate coordinate pairs with names & commas. (ex. Bob's Tank 34.365, -110.663. Clear Spring 34.55, -110.107, etc.):			
Project Type:	Habitat Restoration - Grassland and Browse Restoration		
Water Project Action (if applicable):	NA		
Habitat Restoration Action (if applicable):	Remove encroaching trees from historic grassland areas thereby restoring grassland and browse communities for mule deer, pronghorn and elk.		
Other Project Type and Action (if applicable):	NA		
Has this project been submitted in previous years?	No		

PROJECT SUMMARY

Describe the proposed action only. Please use plain English, what action are you proposing? (If applicable, please reference any completed compliance including EAC#).

Brief Project Summary:

The \$50,000 of HPC funding requested through this application will serve as a vital portion of the required match to a National Fish and Wildlife Federation (NFWF) \$220,000 grant request. These funds, already-secured match, and the funding requested through NFWF will be used to enhance big game habitat by removing encroaching juniper and pinyon pine trees from former grasslands and savannas on a total of 2,353 acres of critical winter and migration stopover habitat on the Coconino and Kaibab National Forests. Mastication will be performed utilizing a drum grinder

mounted on a rubber-tired tractor. Collar data was used to prioritize these project areas which will augment the \$330,000 already spent on adjacent tracts. The Slate Mountain project is 1,189 acres, with an average treatment cost of approximately \$185 per acre, and is located on the northern boundary of the Coconino National Forest. The Boyd Knoll project is 1,164 acres, with an average treatment cost of approximately \$185 per acre, located 15 miles southwest of Williams on the Kaibab National Forest.

Coconino National Forest issued a Categorical Exclusion and signed a Decision Memo for the Slate Mountain project area on September 12, 2019 and the project area has been reviewed for cultural, archaeological and historical resources resulting in a determination of *No Historic or Cultural Properties Affected*. The Arizona Game and Fish Department has completed its environmental review process (EAC M19-0709124319) and will be completed under a Challenge Cost Share Agreement between AGFD and the Coconino National Forest. (20-CS-11030408-153).

The Boyd Knoll project area is included within Kaibab National Forest's South Zone Grassland Restoration Project EA completed in November 2017. The project will avoid archaeological resources, which have been mapped by the Kaibab National Forest. The Arizona Game and Fish Department has completed its environmental review process via EAC M19-0829080510 and will be completed under a Challenge Cost Share Agreement between AGFD and the Kaibab National Forest (19-CS-11030700-002).

Primary Big Game Wildlife Species to Benefit:	mule deer, elk and pronghorn	
Implementation Schedule (Month/Day/Year)	START DATE: 05/01/2021	COMPLETION DATE: 7/30/2022

PROJECT FUNDING

<p style="text-align: center;">Project Funding</p> <p>*Qualifying Cost Share should be restricted to support (materials, compliance, and or labor) of the proposed action ONLY (same time and place). Please do not include previously purchased supplies or past completed work.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Itemized Use of Funds</p> <p>Please email separate quotes if HPC funds are to be used to purchase materials or contracted labor: HPC@azgfd.gov.</p>
<p><u>HPC Funds Requested</u></p> <p>Amount: \$50,000</p> <p><u>Cost Share or Matching Funds</u></p> <p>Amount: \$390,000</p> <p><u>Percent Match</u> 8.6:1</p> <p><u>Total Project Cost</u></p> <p>Amount: \$440,000</p>	<p>All funding will be used to pay one or several state contractors for rubber-tired mastication.</p>

ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE

Please indicate the status of the Project's compliance. if you are unsure, please reference:
HPC Compliance Checklist (<https://www.azgfd.com/wildlife/hpc/forms/>).
If you have questions regarding the requirement of an EAC, contact AGFD's Project Evaluation Program:
(<https://www.azgfd.com/wildlife/planning/projevalprogram/>).
***Please email supporting compliance documents to HPC@azgfd.gov ***

AGFD EAC Checklist Completed:	Yes	Completion Date:	Slate Mtn - 10/2019 Boyd Knoll - 1/2019
NEPA Completed:	Yes	Completion Date:	Slate Mtn - 09/2019 Boyd Knoll - 11/2017
State Historic Preservation Office/ Archaeological Clearance:	Yes	Completion Date:	Slate Mtn - 09/2019 Boyd Knoll - 1/2019

CONTACT INFORMATION

Applicant

The project applicant is the responsible party for seeing the work through to completion.

APPLICANT NAME: Steve Cassady, AGFD, FOR2
LRPS

Hannah Griscom, AGFD,

FOR2 HS

ORGANIZATION: Arizona Game and Fish
Department

ADDRESS: 3500 S LAKE MARY RD, FLAGSTAFF AZ
86005

PHONE: SC - (928) 214-1270
HG - (928) 214-1252

EMAIL: SC -
scassady@azgfd.gov
HG -
hgriscom@azgfd.gov

AGFD Project Proponent

The Project Proponent is responsible for compliance, implementation, and annual/final reporting requirements.

AGFD CONTACT NAME: Same as above

PHONE: Same as above

Cooperators

COOPERATOR NAME(S), ORGANIZATION, ROLE IN PROJECT:

Babbitt Ranches (Slate Mountain Allotment Livestock Permittee), Coconino NF (Slate Mountain Allotment Landowner), Kaibab NF (Boyd Knoll Landowner)

PROJECT NEED AND DESCRIPTION

Please use direct language: why is this project important? What problem will be solved? How will you implement it, and how will the habitat be enhanced? Please include # of acres, methods, roles, and any phases. Please be specific and thorough.

NEED STATEMENT – PROBLEM ANALYSIS:

In these project areas, fire suppression has allowed decades of juniper and pinyon tree encroachment into former grasslands and savannas. This has resulted in smaller, more fragmented blocks of grassland; negatively impacting migration corridors and winter range for big game. Recently-collected collar data from pronghorn and mule deer indicate that both project areas are frequented by migrating or overwintering herds of both species. Both locations are also very popular hunting grounds for early and late hunters of elk, mule deer and pronghorn. Improving migration corridors and winter range habitat is a priority identified by the Department's State Wildlife Action Plan, the Department of Interior's recent Secretarial Order 3362, and the Secretary of Agriculture's June 2020 memo regarding big game habitat.

Removing encroaching junipers and pinyons will allow more sunlight, water and nutrients to benefit existing shrubs, grasses and forbs needed by big game. Mule deer, especially, will have more forage, when species such as cliffrose and mountain mahogany have more space to grow and recruit. In addition, opening up the tree canopy will increase pronghorn use and time spent foraging due to better surrounding visibility. Old growth junipers and pinyon pines will be retained during work, as they provide important cover for many game and nongame species. This grassland restoration work will also benefit nongame grassland obligate species such as Gunnison's prairie dog, western bluebirds, and horned larks.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND STRATEGIES:

We propose to remove encroaching juniper and pinyon pine trees from former grasslands and savannas on approximately 2,353 acres through mastication utilizing a drum grinder mounted on a rubber-tired tractor. This project is ready to implement and augments the 1,800 acres (\$330,000) that have already been or will soon be treated in both the Slate Mountain and Boyd Knoll project areas. The Slate Mountain project is a component of Coconino National Forest's North Forest Grassland Restoration Project encompassing over 23,000 acres. To date, AGFD has funded treatment of over 900 of those acres, with an additional 400 acres planned for treatment in fiscal year 2021. In addition, the project is adjacent to Babbitt Ranches' CO Bar Ranch where over 40,000 acres of grassland restoration has been completed in the past 15 years, linking habitat north to south from the Grand Canyon National Park south rim area to habitat in the San Francisco Peaks area and from east to west from Wupatki National Monument area to the south rim area.

The Boyd Knoll project is a component of Kaibab National Forest's South Zone Grassland Restoration Project, to restore up to approximately 550,000 acres of grassland and savanna on the Tusayan and Williams Ranger Districts. The Kaibab National Forest, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), permittees, AGFD, and others have already restored approximately 4,000 of these acres in the last 3 years; mostly located on the Wash Tub allotment southeast of Ash Fork. The Boyd Knoll project is just east of this ongoing work, and serves as a critical migration link from winter to summer grounds, as corroborated by pronghorn collar data. Boyd Knoll is a "retreatment" of a juniper clearing from the 1960s. \$100,000 were spent by the Department in 2020 to kick off this project with 520 acres of completed treatment.

The requested \$50,000 of HPC funds, along with an additional \$170,000 of already-allocated non-federal funds, will be used as a match for a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) \$220,000 grant request in September of 2020. Both projects are scalable, both up and down, in the event either this HPC or the NFWF project is not fully funded or contractor bids are lower or higher than estimated by Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) staff. Please note that what we have submitted is our initial plan but seasonal or jurisdictional restrictions may influence our ability to get the acres treated. We would like the ability to reallocate funding between project areas if any restrictions or increased opportunities present themselves. If this need occurs, any modifications to this original plan will be coordinated with the Habitat Partnership Committee prior to any final decision or modifying action taken. Also, if the NFWF grant is not awarded, this proposal will be pulled from the HPC cue, so there is no risk of losing the match promised here.

AGFD staff will work with appropriate staff from the Coconino and Kaibab NFs to develop grassland and savanna restoration prescriptions that meet big game requirements. AGFD will solicit and retain the qualified contractor(s) to perform the work as well as provide guidance to the contractor(s), inspection and certification of completed work.

Implementation Timeline

Name	April 2021	June 2021	Aug 2022	Sept 2022
Slate Mtn & Boyd Knoll	Hire Contractor, Collect Monitoring Data	Begin Work	Complete Work, Collect Monitoring Data	Write and Submit Final Report
Misc			Reallocate any unspent \$ to ready acres	

LAND OWNERSHIP AT THE PROJECT SITE(S):

The Slate Mountain project area is on Forest Service lands administered by the Coconino National Forest, Flagstaff Ranger District. The Boyd Knoll project area is on Forest Service lands administered by the Kaibab National Forest, Williams Ranger District.

PROJECT MONITORING PLAN:

Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) staff in conjunction with Coconino and Kaibab National Forests' staff will establish photo monitoring points and take before and after photos. These photo points will also be used to provide long term photo monitoring of the treatment areas.

PROJECT MAINTENANCE:

No maintenance will be required.

PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT TO BE FILED BY:

Project completion reports will be submitted by AGFD staff:
 Slate Mountain project – Steve Cassady, FOR2 LRPS
 Boyd Knoll project – Hannah Griscom, FOR2 HS

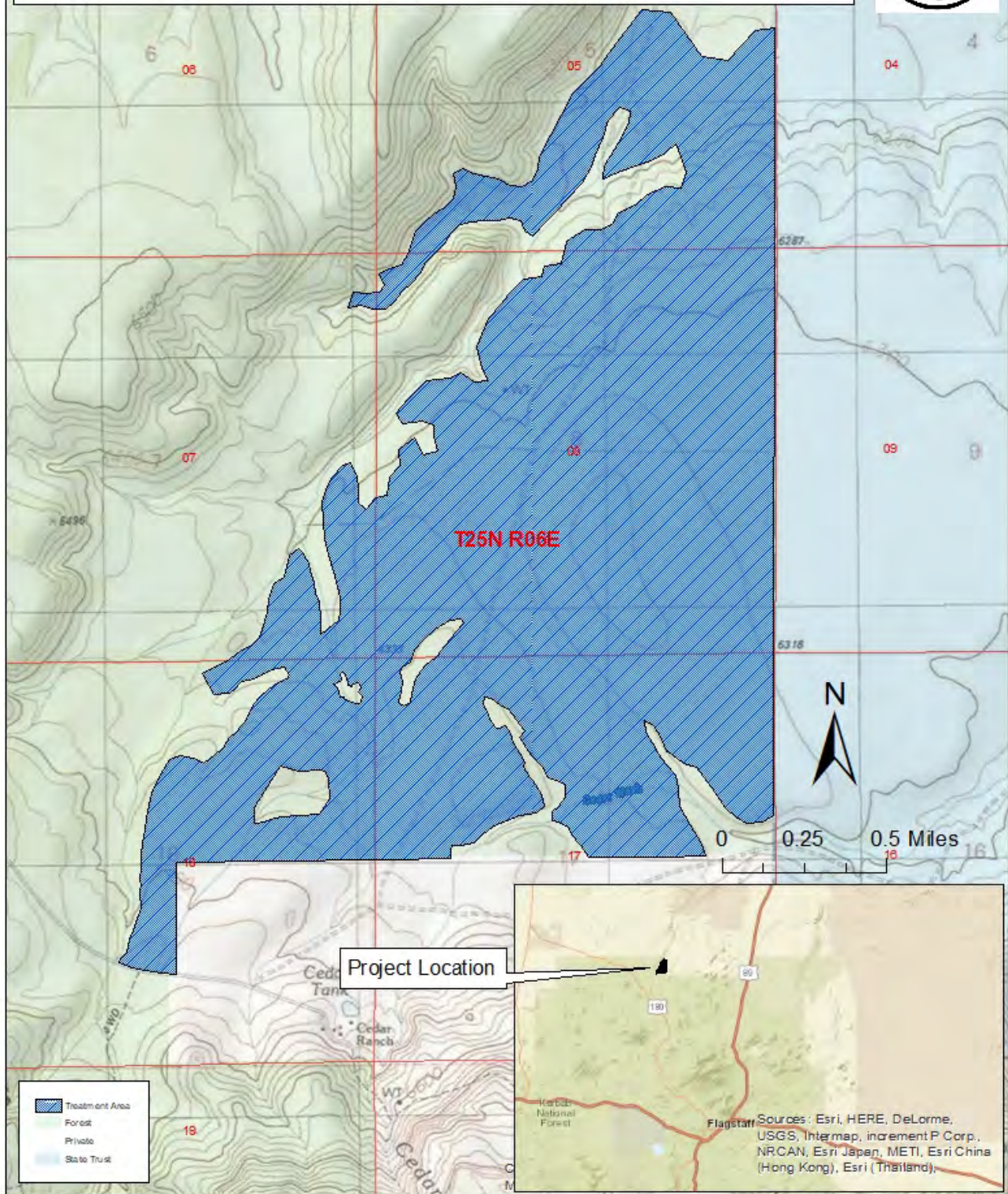
SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS LIST:

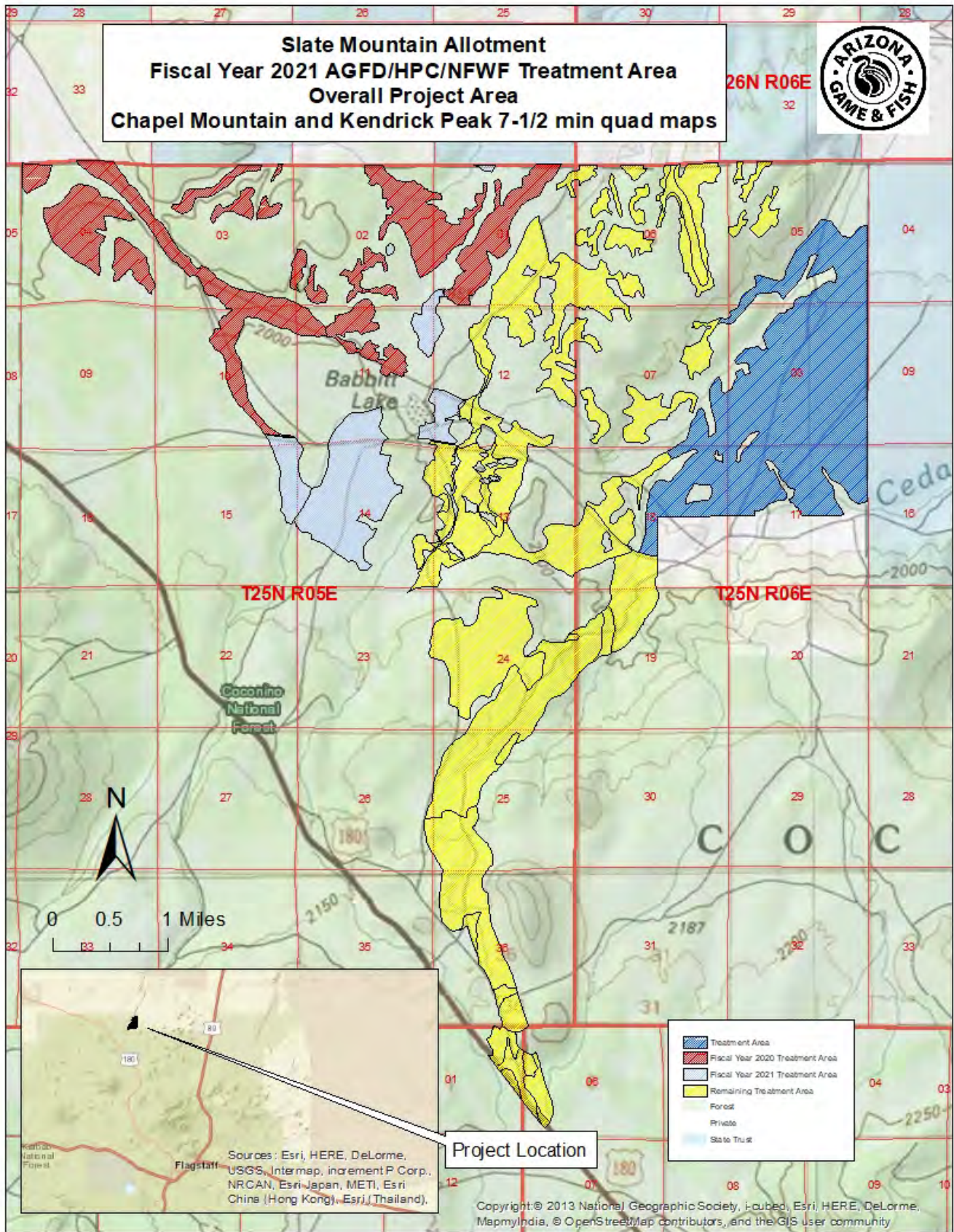
EAC M19-0709124319, Coconino National Forest North Forest Grassland Restoration
 EAC M19-0829080510, Wash Tub NAGI Grasslands Restoration, Kaibab National Forest
 North Forest Grassland Restoration Categorical Exclusion Decision Memo
 South Zone Grasslands Restoration EA Decision Memo.
 Boyd Knoll Forest Service mastication prescription 2019
 North Forest Grassland SHPO consultation documentation
 Challenge Cost Share Agreement between AGFD and the Coconino National Forest. (20-CS-11030408-153)
 Challenge Cost Share Agreement between AGFD and the Kaibab National Forest. (19-CS-11030700-002)
 Shapefile of project areas
 Statement of Project Importance from AGFD, FOR2 Regional Supervisor, Scott Poppenberger

Have supporting documents been submitted?

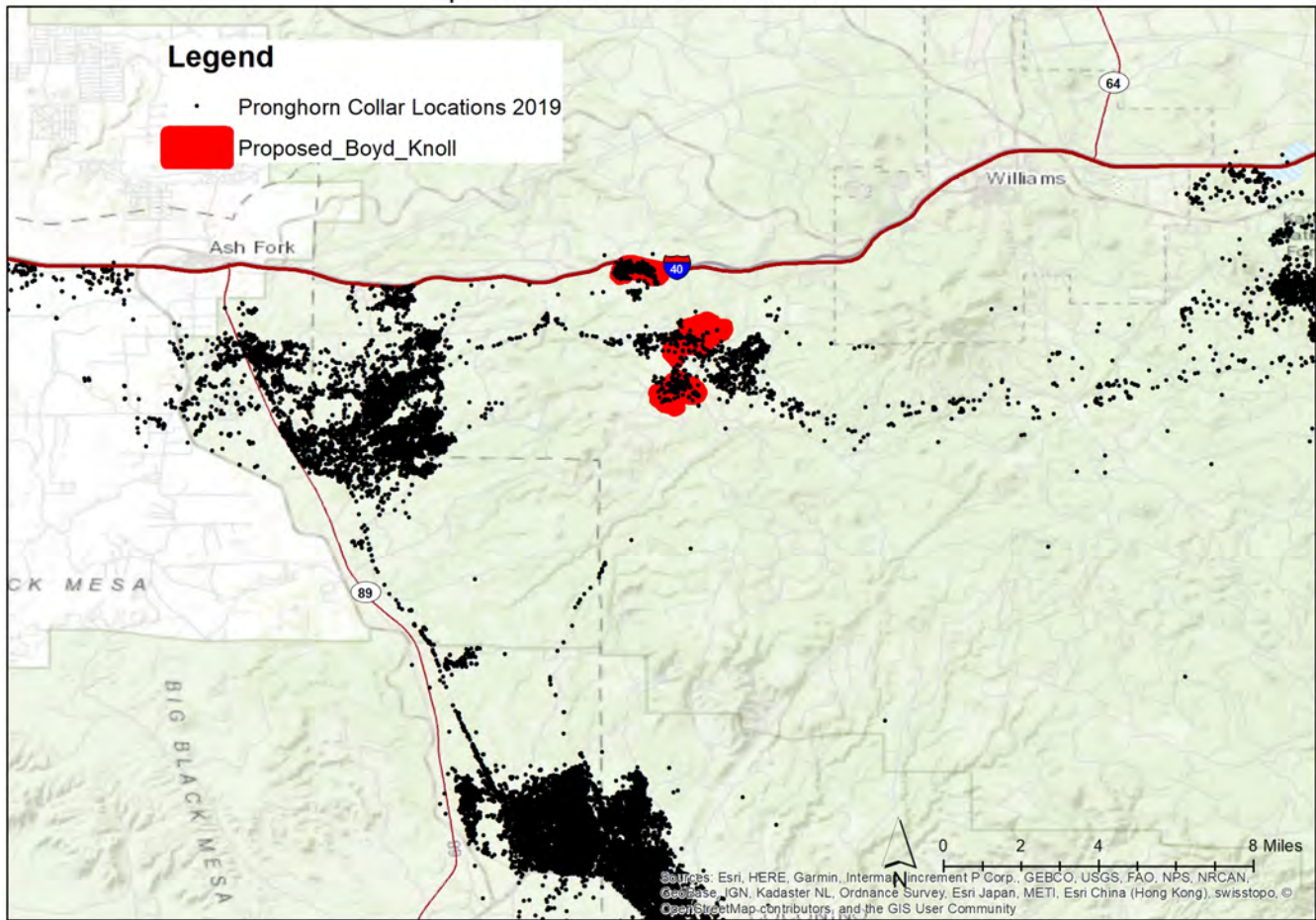
Due to the size of the supporting documents, they will be provided upon request.

**SO 3362 Big Game Winter Range and Migration Corridor Improvement:
Slate Mountain and Boyd Knoll
(Slate Mountain Component)
Chapel Mountain 7-1/2 min quad map**





Boyd Knoll - Pronghorn Migration Paths with Proposed Mastication Treatments





Typical Tree Encroachment on Slate Mountain Allotment Planned Treatment Area



Typical Tree Encroachment on Boyd Knoll Planned Treatment Area



August 24, 2020

Kirby Bristow
Habitat Partnership Committee Coordinator
Arizona Game and Fish Department

RE: SO 3362 Big Game Winter Range and Migration Corridor Improvement: Slate Mountain and Boyd Knoll Habitat Partnership Committee (HPC) Application for Funding

This correspondence is to document that funding for the combined Slate Mountain and Boyd Knoll areas project, as components of the larger scale Grand Canyon to Prescott Corridor Complex, one of Arizona Game and Fish Department's (AGFD) SO 3362 Priority Big Game Corridors, is of high importance to Region II of the Arizona Game and Fish Department.

Region II staff have worked tirelessly with our Forest Service and rancher partners in obtaining the required National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documentation, cultural and archaeological clearance, and necessary agreements to implement these projects. As a result both projects are truly "shovel ready".

The requested \$50,000 will be used as a portion of the match required of a National Fish and Wildlife Federation (NFWF) grant request which we feel has a very high probability of being funded. And it should be noted that these HPC funds will not only be matched by the NFWF funds, but also by the additional \$170,000 of funds put together by AGFD's Landowner Relations Program staff.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Poppenberger".

Scott Poppenberger
Regional Supervisor
Arizona Game and Fish Department, FOR2
Flagstaff, Arizona

azgfd.gov | 928.774.5045

FLAGSTAFF OFFICE: 3500 S. LAKE MARY ROAD, FLAGSTAFF AZ 86005

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