

## **Arizona Game and Fish Department FY2015 Tribal Report**

### **General:**

The Department has expanded its outreach and activities from 8 Arizona Tribes in FY 2014 to 15 in FY 2015 improving communications, cooperation and coordination. As noted below, these interactions have ranged from education (game management, youth hunter education and supplying fishing rods and tackle) to cooperative agreements for recreational activities, as well as, criminal investigations for unlawful take. Approximately 300 students graduated from the hunter education classes.

The Department's Wildlife Management Division Tribal Liaison attended the annual Tribal Legislative Day held at the Arizona State Capitol in January 2015 and provided necessary Department representation and opportunistic coordination at the event. Contacts were made with key Tribes having specific, ongoing interaction with the Department, with other more general contacts and outreach also being conducted during the event.

The Department's Wildlife Management Division Tribal Liaison attended the annual conference of the Native American Wildlife Society (Southwest Region) held in Albuquerque, NM in August, 2014. Apart from providing general Department coordination and outreach during the conference, the Department's Tribal Liaison also provided a session presentation on the Mexican wolf Reintroduction Program, which included updates on the Department's ongoing involvement in the Project and its position on key issues relating to the then-ongoing USFWS Proposed 10j Rule that guides deployment of the Project in the Southwest.

### **White Mountain Apache Tribe:**

Pinetop Regional personnel met with White Mountain Apache Tribe (WMAT) wildlife personnel to discuss big game population and management topics and nuisance bear management strategies.

The Pinetop Region received over 25 requests from the White Mountain Apache Game and Fish and White Mountain Apache Investigators for assistance with information and intelligence on wildlife cases, background investigations and ARPA investigations.

Pinetop Regional personnel met with WMAT fisheries personnel in December 2014 and March 2015 to discuss and coordinate recovery activities for threatened Apache Trout. These meetings also included fisheries personnel from the US Fish and Wildlife Service and Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests as part of the Implementation Team.

WMAT fisheries personnel were invited to assist with a boat electrofishing survey on Willow Springs Lake on June 10, 2015. They had inquired about the effectiveness of a new electrofishing boat purchased by Pinetop Regional personnel, so they were invited to see it operating in person and help run the boat. This helped them decide which kind of electrofishing boat they would purchase themselves, and helped the Region complete this high priority work.

A Department contingent on the Mexican wolf reintroduction project assisted White Mountain Apache Game and Fish biologists with surveys and trapping efforts, including the trapping and collaring of three previously uncollared wolves on the reservation and the helicopter survey of all collared wolves on the reservation as part of the overall end of year survey effort. Department personnel also attended a wildlife outreach event at Bog Tank on the reservation to discuss Mexican wolf management issues.

The Department continues to routinely engage and coordinate on Mexican wolf Reintroduction Program operations with WMAT through the Interagency Field Team (IFT), which is comprised of personnel from AGFD and WMAT (among other agencies). The Department continues to provide additional coordination to WMAT through other personnel and venues on a case-by-case basis (depending upon the situation and issue at hand) but the IFT continues to maintain constant contact and coordination with WMAT on the day-to-day implementation of the Program.

The Department's Wildlife Management Division (WMD) and Fisheries Branch initiated and successfully completed negotiations with WMAT on the development of a new Cooperative Agreement between the Department and Tribe that will secure annual delivery of Apache trout eggs from USFWS Hatchery located on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation to the Department in exchange for annual payments to the Tribe's Game and Fish Department which will be used to support the Tribe's recreational fishing programs. This new Agreement has been approved by the WMAT Game and Fish Director and is awaiting approval by the AGFC (August 2015) for it to be fully executed and approved.

On August 2, 2015, a hunter education class was conducted on the White Mountain Apache Reservation by the Hunter Education Instructors. As a result 20 students graduated from the class.

### **San Carlos Apache Tribe:**

The WMD Tribal Liaison met with the San Carlos Wildlife and Recreation Department's Director in June 2015 to explore renewal of applicable MOUs that have either expired or are scheduled to expire between the Tribe and the Department. This meeting also provided an opportunity to provide the Tribe updates on ongoing legal actions undertaken by the Department involving the Mexican wolf Reintroduction Program and the planned implementation of expanded Program operations in Arizona stemming from the new USFWS 10j Final Rule that guides deployment of the Program in the Southwest.

The Pinetop Region received 6 requests from the San Carlos Game and Fish Department for assistance in various wildlife cases. These requests were for background investigations, information and intelligence sharing on several known repeat offenders.

San Carlos Game and Fish Department was invited to participate in a week long training program, for new wildlife officers that the Department conducted. San Carlos sent one officer and one observer to the law enforcement training that occurred at Horseshoe Ranch in March

2015. Officers received training in patrol activities, crime scene investigations, evidence collection and search warrants.

In May of 2015, two hunter education classes were conducted on the San Carlos Apache Reservation by the Department's Hunter Education Instructors. As a result a total of 50 students graduated from these six classes.

The law enforcement program in Pinetop met with the new Director for the San Carlos Game and Fish Department and discussed the importance of the relationship that both agencies have with each other and that it continues. Both agencies agreed to hold a coordination meeting to discuss game management and law enforcement topics in the late summer of 2015. The Department Regions I and VI staff have a coordination meeting schedule for August 20<sup>th</sup> with Tribal law enforcement staff.

### **Hopi Tribe:**

The Flagstaff Region's Condor and Fisheries Program attended the 2014 Native American Fish and Wildlife Conference on invitation by the Hopi Tribe in Albuquerque NM. Presentations were given to the conference about the condor recovery program and fisheries management at Lee's Ferry.

The Flagstaff Region's Condor program coordinator assisted the Hopi tribe with a question and answer session and with locating vendors to supply the Hopi tribe with non-lead ammunition.

A Flagstaff Regional Wildlife Manager cooperated with Hopi law enforcement officers investigating an unlawful take and possession of a pronghorn by non-tribal member ranch workers associated with the Clear Creek Ranch owned by the Hopi Tribe. The take and possession of the pronghorn occurred on both Tribal and State Lands. The Wildlife Manger ultimately cited the two suspects for the unlawful take and possession of the animal.

The Flagstaff region coordinated with the Hopi tribe to deliver wildlife parts for tribal ceremonial purposes. Several sets of hunter-harvested Merriam's turkey wings and tails were delivered as well as a road killed black bear.

The Flagstaff region coordinated with the Hopi Tribe regarding cultural resource concerns that arose on a Department wildlife area in order to ensure the tribe's cultural interests were considered.

The Flagstaff Region coordinated with the Hopi Tribe regarding the proposed Grand Canyon Watershed National Monument. During its coordination, the Region shared the Commission's opposition to and reasoning regarding the proposed monument and the Department's analysis of the potential impacts of the designation.

The Flagstaff region continues to work with the Hopi Department of Wildlife and Ecosystem Management on the cooperative hunting agreement for the Hopi/State checkerboard lands located southeast of Flagstaff. The agencies meet once in the fall, to review proposed elk and

pronghorn hunt tag allocations, as well as agree on permit numbers. The second meeting is in the winter to review proposed deer hunt tag and winter allocations and agree on permit numbers. This coordination is for both Hopi and State hunters on the shared lands, as well as sharing revenue for the Hopi tags with the Hopi tribe. The Hopi representatives also participate in Department ground and aerial elk and pronghorn surveys each fall. Hunter education classes, equipment and materials are additional assistance provided by Regional personnel.

The Flagstaff Region is coordinating with the Hopi tribe on a revision of the cooperative hunting agreement, which is set to expire in the spring of 2016.

The Flagstaff Region coordinated the opportunity for Hopi Tribal Wildlife and Ecosystems Management officers to attend a Department-sponsored wildlife officer training.

### **Yavapai-Prescott Indian Tribe:**

On May 16-17, Kingman Regional personnel participated in the Tribe's Prescott Go Outdoors event at Frontier Village in Prescott. Personnel worked a general information booth and were available to answer questions.

In September 2014, Yavapai Tribal member Arleigh Bonnaha, and Region III Fisheries personnel, participated on an electrofishing survey on Watson Lake. He was interested in the fishery and outdoor recreation activities in the Prescott area and expressed that the Tribe would be interested in partnering with Arizona Game and Fish in future activities.

Region III Supervisor, Tom Finley, sent a letter to Ernest Jones Sr., President of the Yavapai-Prescott Indian Tribal Council. In his letter, Finley suggested a coordination meeting between the Department and the Yavapai-Prescott Tribal leadership. The Region is still waiting for a response and is hopeful that a meeting will be scheduled.

### **Navajo Nation:**

Kingman Regional personnel continued to coordinate and collaborate with the Navajo Nation to secure access for recreational activities on the Big Boquillas Ranch north of Seligman. In April of 2014, the Navajo Nation and the Department signed the first Cooperative Agreement since the Navajo Nation acquired the ranch in 1987. The agreement allows the Department to work with the grazing lessee on the ranch to develop a lasting access model on the ranch as part of the Department's Landowner Compact Program.

Kingman Regional personnel also worked with Navajo Nation Department of Fish and Wildlife personnel on the 2015 Wildlife Summit, but its location in New Mexico prevented in-person participation. Personnel from Kingman, Flagstaff, and Pinetop helped coordinate the event which focused on wolves, black-footed ferrets, and the California condor. It was similar to the event on August 5-6, 2014 held at Twin Arrows.

In June 2015, the Department scheduled and held a conference call with the Director of Navajo Nation Department of Fish and Wildlife (and staff) and the Tribe's Attorney to review and

discuss ongoing legal actions undertaken by the Department against the USFWS involving the Mexican wolf Reintroduction Project. The Department's WMD Assistant Director, Attorney General and Tribal Liaison participated in the call and provided all information requested of the Navajo Nation.

In August 2014, Pinetop Regional personnel participated in two range field days, as part of a Hunter Education Course in Gallup, NM, to assist the Navajo Department of Fish and Wildlife. Two regional officers were mentors for two tribal youths during the 2014 Navajo Nation Youth Deer hunt in October 2014 in the Carrizo Mountains within the Four Corners area, which was attended by 19 Navajo Youth hunters. Department officers mentored tribal youth in hunter ethics, wildlife identification, tracking wildlife, caring for harvested wildlife and respect for the outdoors.

The Pinetop Office provided law enforcement assistance to the Navajo Department of Fish and Wildlife, which included information and intelligence sharing, background investigations, investigative assistance on eagle collections and sharing information on individuals who are currently under license revocation.

Hunter Education Instructors conducted 11 hunter education classes during the 2015 fiscal year. These classes were offered at various locations throughout the year. As a result a total of 206 students graduated from these classes.

In August of 2015, Department staff assisted the Navajo Department of Fish and Wildlife with two Hunter Education field days outside of Gallup, NM. These field days were part of the youth hunt conducted by the reservation. Education staff worked with the Navajo Nation personnel to conduct this mentored Deer hunt in October 2015.

In May, staff from the Wildlife Education Branch brought live animals to the Navajo Nation's annual ZooFest, at the Navajo Zoo, in Window Rock. Staff worked with Tribal elders staff first to determine the culturally appropriate animals to bring for display and to create signage for the animals in Navajo. This year staff brought a prairie dog, falcon, hawks, and eagles to the event. Staff was invited to give an on-stage presentation about eagles to community members and to participate in a blessing given by the Navajo Nation President.

The Flagstaff Region represented the Department at the Southern Rockies Landscape Conservation Cooperative (SRLCC). The SRLCC is a multi-agency effort to deliver conservation on the ground collectively on the Colorado Plateau, which includes portions of the states of Arizona, Utah, New Mexico, Colorado, and Wyoming. Two tribes were represented at the meeting, including the Navajo Nation.

The Condor program continued its coordination with the Navajo Nation regarding lead ammunition reduction actions. A tribal deer hunt was donated to the condor recovery program as a "gut pile raffle" prize. Future coordination will occur to institute expansion of the "gut pile raffle" on tribal lands.

The Navajo Nation was asked to expand their involvement in condor recovery efforts and was invited to become a partner in an overarching MOU to aid in that effort. The Nation has agreed to sign onto the MOU and details of that arrangement are currently being worked out.

Flagstaff Region's Condor program was invited to provide a presentation about condors and the recovery program to the tribal "Pathways" program, a summertime program for tribal youths.

Staff from the Department's Wildlife Center assisted the Director the Navajo Nation zoo in obtaining non-releasable wildlife (a deer and red-tailed hawk) for exhibition purposes.

The Heritage Data Management System (HDMS) continues to work with the Navajo Natural Heritage Program on a regular basis. The programs share information on species found both on the Navajo Nation and the rest of Arizona. Participants from both programs are often on multi-agency teams and work together on conservation ranks and other issues related to Natural Heritage Programs.

### **Hualapai Tribe:**

On Sept 10, 2014 Kingman Regional personnel conducted two classroom presentations on Venomous Creatures at Valentine Elementary near Peach Springs, Ariz. Fifty students, grades 3-6, attended the presentations.

In the fall of 2014 and the spring of 2015, Hualapai Tribal personnel assisted the black-footed ferret project in spotlighting efforts in Aubrey Valley. When spotlighting on the reservation, equipment was provided to the Hualapai tribe to spotlight and project personnel remained on-call to process any ferrets that were captured.

In February 2014, Hualapai Tribal personnel from the Department of Natural Resources attended the Black-footed Ferret and Gunnison's Prairie Dog Working Group Meeting in Flagstaff. Department personnel offered assistance in monitoring habitat for prairie dogs and ferrets, and were available to answer any questions. Monitoring efforts continued in the summer of 2015 using techniques learned for density mapping.

In January 2015, project staff provided information to APHIS personnel on ferrets and prairie dogs to complete NEPA documents for rangeland grasshopper removal on the Hualapai reservation.

Two hunter education classes were conducted for the Hualapai Tribe by the Hunter Education Instructors during the 2015 fiscal year. These classes were offered on the reservation throughout the year. As a result 24 students graduated from these two classes.

In October, a law enforcement officer with the Hualapai Tribe Game and Fish Department in Peach Spring, found an injured golden eagle and sent it to the Department's wildlife rehabilitation center for veterinary care. After an approximately two month recovery period the eagle was fully rehabilitated and returned to the wild.

### **Havasupai Tribe:**

Region III Supervisor, Tom Finley, sent a letter to Rex Tilousi, Chairman of the Havasupai Tribal Council. In his letter, Mr. Finley suggested a coordination meeting between the Department and the Havasupai Tribal leadership. The Region is still waiting for a response and is hopeful that a meeting will be scheduled in the near future.

Flagstaff Regional personnel, working with local NRCD and NRCS staff, met with the Havasupai Tribe wildlife department and other Tribal representatives to provide recommendations towards range and wildlife habitat improvements in the Pasture Wash area of the Havasupai Tribe rangeland.

### **Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation:**

#### **Pueblo of Zuni:**

The Department continues to coordinate its efforts to comply with the terms of the Little Colorado River Water Rights Settlement agreement with the Zuni. In light of some of the difficulties identified with upstream acquisitions, the Department has initiated dialogue with the Zuni to discuss shifting its focus to contributing resources toward instream flows and habitat/riparian restoration on sections of the LCR below Lyman Dam. The Department will be meeting with Zuni representatives in early FY16.

#### **Yavapai-Apache Nation: Partnership**

The Department is working with the Yavapai-Apache Nation to develop a hunter education program that will embrace the traditional aspects of hunting while teaching general hunter safety for youth and adults.



### **Kaibab Band of Paiutes:**

The Flagstaff Region's Condor program continued to partner with the Paiutes to expand the voluntary lead reduction actions for California condors on tribal lands. Continuing coordination

and refining future involvement with the Paiutes in the “gut pile raffle” including partnering with them in developing a secure location for hunters participating in tribal hunts to drop off their gut piles and participate in the raffle. The Paiutes were included in the “gut pile raffle” this year. The Department provided a freezer for use in this effort.

The condor program made a presentation to the Council inviting the tribe to join as a partner on the overarching MOU for condor recovery. The Council voted to become a partner in this effort.

Flagstaff Regional staff continues to partner with the Paiutes in collection of chronic wasting disease (CWD) samples from mule deer harvested during Tribal hunts. During the operation of the Jacob Lake Check Station in 2015, Tribal members will again have the opportunity to obtain training in CWD sample collection from AGFD personnel.

In November 2015, Flagstaff regional personnel attended an annual hunter banquet hosted by the Tribe.

In May 2015, Flagstaff Regional personnel attended the annual fishing clinic at the fishing ponds on the Kaibab Paiute Reservation. The annual event includes participation of elementary school kids from the town of Fredonia. Approximately 250 pounds of trout were stocked in the ponds and every child that attended was successful in catching fish. In addition to attending this event, the Fishing Education program assisted Regional personnel by providing 25 rods/reels and tackle (long-term loan) for the tribe to conduct sport fishing activities.

In May 2015, the AZ Game and Fish Commission, plus staff from the Flagstaff Region met with representatives of the Paiutes and National Park Service staff and toured the Pipe Springs National Monument located on the Paiute Reservation.

Flagstaff Regional personnel participated in the annual coordination meeting with representatives from the Paiutes, Bureau of Land Management and Utah Department of Water Resources to maintain working relations, schedule hunt patrols, and notify participating agencies of hunt dates, permit number, results and future wildlife projects planned for the area.

### **Gila River Indian Community:**

The Yuma Regional Wildlife Program has begun coordinating with the Gila River Indian Community (Community) to complete an aerial survey of bighorn sheep in the Sierra Estrella in October, 2015. The Sierra Estrella encompasses both public and tribal sovereign lands. The entire mountain range, of which approximately half is public and half sovereign, would not normally be surveyed. The Community expressed an interest in completing a survey on their lands this year, and have obligated funding to achieve that goal. A complete survey will be of benefit to both the Community and the Arizona Game and Fish Department, as it will give us a much better measure of the bighorn sheep population, than would a partial survey. The Community has indicated that they are interested in more actively managing the bighorn sheep herd on their lands. A cooperative agreement currently exists between the Community and the Arizona Game and Fish Commission, and we are working toward developing a collection agreement that will allow us to conduct the survey on sovereign lands, with associated costs for



that portion of the survey being funded with Community monies. Contracted helicopter services, planning and data analysis will be provided by the Region. Both Community and Regional personnel will participate in the actual survey.

In February, Department Wildlife Education staff was invited to bring a live wildlife display to the Gila River Indian Community's annual Winter Bird Count held at the community center.

Staff worked closely with Tribal officials to determine which animals were culturally appropriate animals to bring for display and to create signage in their native language. Wildlife species found around the community's lands were brought to the event.

Staff from the Tribe's Department of Environmental Quality invited the Department to bring live animals to the April Earth Day celebration at the Ira Hayes Park in Sacaton. Staff worked with Tribal elders staff to determine the culturally appropriate animals to bring for display and to create signage for the animals. This year staff brought a Gila monster, raven, vulture, hawk, desert tortoises, and snake to the event. The current president had his picture taken with the Gila monster and vulture for the local newspaper.

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The Department is in coordination with the Community regarding the South Mountain Freeway project design team. This team meets regularly and is currently developing mitigation measures to incorporate into the design plan.

### **Cocopah Reservation:**

Yuma Regional staff met with representatives of the Cocopah Tribe to discuss how Departmental educational tools, such as Focus on Wild Program, could be used in the Tribes youth at risk programs

### **Tohono O'odham Nation:**

In May, Wildlife Education staff set up a booth with live animals at the April Jewed Ka:Cim Tash (Earth Day) event. Staff worked with Tribal elders' staff first to determine the culturally

appropriate animals to bring. Most of the visitors were children from the nearby school and they were able to meet up close some of the animals found in the Community. A few months later in August, staff participated in the Community Day. The audience was primarily families and again the Department brought animals native to the Community and surrounding desert.

### **Tonto Apache Tribe:**

On June 12-13, the Commission held a meeting at the Mazatzal hotel and casino. Due to the location of this meeting occurring on Tribal lands, Department personnel were in close coordination with tribal police. Tribal police were very helpful in resolving Department concerns related to state law enforcement jurisdiction on tribal lands provided any enforcement action was needed. The Tribe also offered to post tribal police Officer at the Commission meeting during the license revocation hearings in case a physical arrest was required.

### **Fort Mojave Indian Tribe:**

In August 2014, Kingman regional personnel went to the Fort Mojave Tribal Police Department Animal Control Division office to coordinate dove hunt opener patrols with Tribal PD to ensure that AZGFD officers did not overlap patrol efforts with Tribal PD officers. Personnel then patrolled the dove hunt opener in the middle of a patchwork of tribal agricultural fields.

Kingman regional personnel received a call from the Fort Mohave Tribal Police Department regarding a bunch of waterfowl carcasses dumped on the side of a road in tribal agricultural fields in December. Personnel responded to the area and found the carcasses. One of the geese at the scene was left completely to waste, and the hunter left bloody grocery bags and rubber gloves with the 15 carcasses. Regional personnel recorded the evidence left at the scene and created a DR and a report, but were unable to track down the hunter despite using social media to stir up leads.