

ARIZONA HABITAT PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE CHARTER

Purpose: The Arizona Habitat Partnership Committee (HPC) serves in an advisory capacity to the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) and Arizona Game and Fish Commission (AGFC) on the implementation of habitat projects funded by the sale of Special Big Game Tags (SBGT). Funds derived from the sale of SBGTs are expended at the discretion of the AGFC as delegated to AGFD according to Arizona Administrative Code R12-4-120.D-F.

Authorities: The “Arizona Elk Habitat Partnership Committee” was established by the Arizona Game and Fish Commission in 1992, to reduce elk-livestock conflicts and promote partnerships among the AGFD, livestock operators, wildlife conservation organizations, land managers, and other stakeholders. In January 1996, it was renamed the “Arizona Habitat Partnership Committee” and given a broader mandate for wildlife habitat enhancement statewide, using funds derived from the sale of SBGT. In 2016, AHPC became part of the Landowner Relations and Habitat Enhancement Program, which leverages a variety of funding sources to restore/enhance wildlife habitat and secure public access for wildlife-associated recreation.

Goals:

- develop and implement collaborative habitat restoration and enhancement projects with maximum benefit to big game and other Arizona wildlife
- provide a forum for discussion and interaction on other Department management actions.
- foster productive partnerships between the Department, wildlife conservation organizations, natural resource managers, and other stakeholders
- maximize leverage of funding and resources to accomplish large-scale projects
- coordinate with land management agencies to incorporate Department and HPC priorities into respective plans

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

AHPC Chair and co-Chair: the chair and co-chair are seated members of the AGFC and appointed annually by the Chair of the AGFC. The Chair helps the HPC Coordinator facilitate regular AHPC meetings, works with AHPC Committee members as needed, and may be asked to mediate conflicts over funding recommendations. The co-chair plays a similar role and may substitute for the chair when necessary.

AHPC Coordinator: the coordinator is a dedicated Department position in the Landowner Relations and Habitat Enhancement Program, Terrestrial Wildlife Branch. The coordinator manages and administers the AHPC Program ensuring compliance with state granting laws (SGL) and open meeting laws (OML). Their duties include managing application submission, review, and grant award process; developing funding agreements; ensuring that projects meet eligibility, compliance, procurement, and reporting requirements; working with the AHPC Chair, LHPCs, and project cooperators; tracking projects through to completion; monitoring SBGLT fund balances; and disseminating information on the AHPC Program and its accomplishments. The Coordinator is also responsible for annual state meeting logistics, agendas, and recorded minutes.

AHPC Committee: The AHPC includes one representative from each eligible wildlife conservation organization (WCO) and one representative from each local HPC group (LHPCs) who provide input to the AGFD within their respective interests. Eligible WCOs must have a

501(c)3 federal tax filing status, have a mission that aligns with the Department's, and a history of conservation in Arizona. The Committee provides information and recommendations to AGFD; members serve as liaisons to their respective organizations, attend annual meetings, and help identify and promote new project opportunities, partnerships, and funding sources. Because the AHPC was appointed by a public body (The AGFC) to make funding recommendations, their meetings are conducted in accordance with Arizona statute that guides open meeting laws.

AGFD Regional Leadership: The Regional Supervisor is process owner for HPC within their region. The Regional Supervisor may be asked to provide regional representative(s) to assist with project evaluation, and assign staff personnel to serve as local HPC lead(s). The lead serves as the primary point of contact for HPC projects, works with proponents to ensure that proposed projects reflect Regional/Department priorities, provides guidance on preparing proposals, coordinates submission of proposals for projects within the region, and coordinates prioritization of proposals submitted each cycle. The lead also maintains the membership roster for LHPCs within the Region and coordinates collaboration with those groups, including feedback on proposed and approved HPC projects.

LHPC: LHPCs are informally organized, local, collaborative groups who help develop, prioritize, and implement projects funded through the HPC program. Because the LHPCs were not appointed by a public body their meetings are not subject to OML. Membership is open to members of wildlife conservation organizations, livestock producers, and staff from natural resource management agencies. LHPCs are self-organized and work closely with land managers and other stakeholders.

LHPC Chair: is a designated member responsible for organizing and facilitating LHPC meetings and representing the group at AHPC meetings. The Chair is generally not a Department employee, although an employee may serve in this role if needed.

LHPC Meetings: each LHPC develops its own meeting schedule and agendas. Because Local LHPCs are self-organized and not appointed by a public body their meetings are not bound by OML.

HPC PROJECT EVALUATION PROCESS:

In compliance with SGLs, the AHPC coordinator annually solicits and assembles project proposals and recruits a state wide proposal evaluation team. This team is composed of Department employees familiar with wildlife habitat requirements, and/or project compliance, and shall include representation from each region. Evaluations are based on objective criteria developed to rate a project's value to wildlife, sportsmen, environmental compliance, cost-benefit, and probability of success. These criteria and proposals are provided to AHPC members each year for independent project evaluation and to help inform future proposal preparation. Using input from AHPC members, available SBGLT funding will be recommended among the highest scoring projects. Funding distribution will be based upon the species of benefit described in the proposals to ensure that funds generated for each big game species are allocated to projects that benefit that species. Funds from individual species accounts should be combined and distributed among proposed projects to the maximum extent practical with the goal of obligating all available funds.

Annual Meetings: The AHPC may meet twice annually as needed. These meetings will address program operations including process improvements, accomplishments, and priorities for future

projects. The winter meeting will follow directly after the Funding Meeting.

Funding Meeting: The AHPC will meet each year to collectively finalize proposal recommendations. The role of the committee during this meeting is to provide advice to inform final funding recommendations, and the AHPC Chair is charged with mediating any differences of opinions.

Project funding recommendations will then be made to the Director and project selection will be shared with the AGFC at the next scheduled AGFC meeting.

ARIZONA HABITAT PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE (HPC) PROJECT GUIDELINES

The HPC Program administers funds derived from the sale of Special Big Game Tags; these funds are used statewide for the benefit of wildlife and their habitats. Funds derived from the sale of SBGTs are expended at the sole discretion of the Commission according to Arizona Administrative Code R12-4-120 D-F. Projects funded through HPC shall:

- Facilitate habitat improvement, restoration, and/or more effective management for one or more big game species
- Support landscape-scale habitat restoration and improvement where feasible
- Address specific needs identified in Management Focus Area (MFA) and other plans developed by, or in cooperation with the Department
- Have demonstrable benefit to the public as well as other wildlife species whenever possible
- Leverage capacity of external cooperators and partners to the fullest extent possible
- Be designed to ensure completion within two years of award with all necessary compliance and land management agency requirements in place before award.

Projects/activities eligible for funding through HPC ^{1, 2}:

- Habitat enhancement/restoration – prescribed fire; vegetation treatment with hand, chemical, or mechanical methods; revegetation (seeding, planting); soil/slope/channel re- contouring and stabilization; protective structures for sensitive areas (e.g., exclosures, jackstrawing)
- Water Developments [catchments (Department priorities), dirt tanks, wells, springs, pipelines, and associated infrastructure] – operation and maintenance, redevelopment, new construction, and water hauling
- Structures benefitting connectivity or management for big game – construction of passage structures, fence (construction, removal, modification to facilitate movement), or other infrastructure
- Wildlife Management – capture/translocation, supplemental surveys not covered by game program funding, population management, forage enhancement
- Monitoring Efforts associated with specific HPC-funded projects

¹ project planning, compliance, and other activities will be considered on a case-by-case basis; contact the HPC Coordinator prior to submitting an application

² work completed prior to an approved project and executed agreement is not eligible