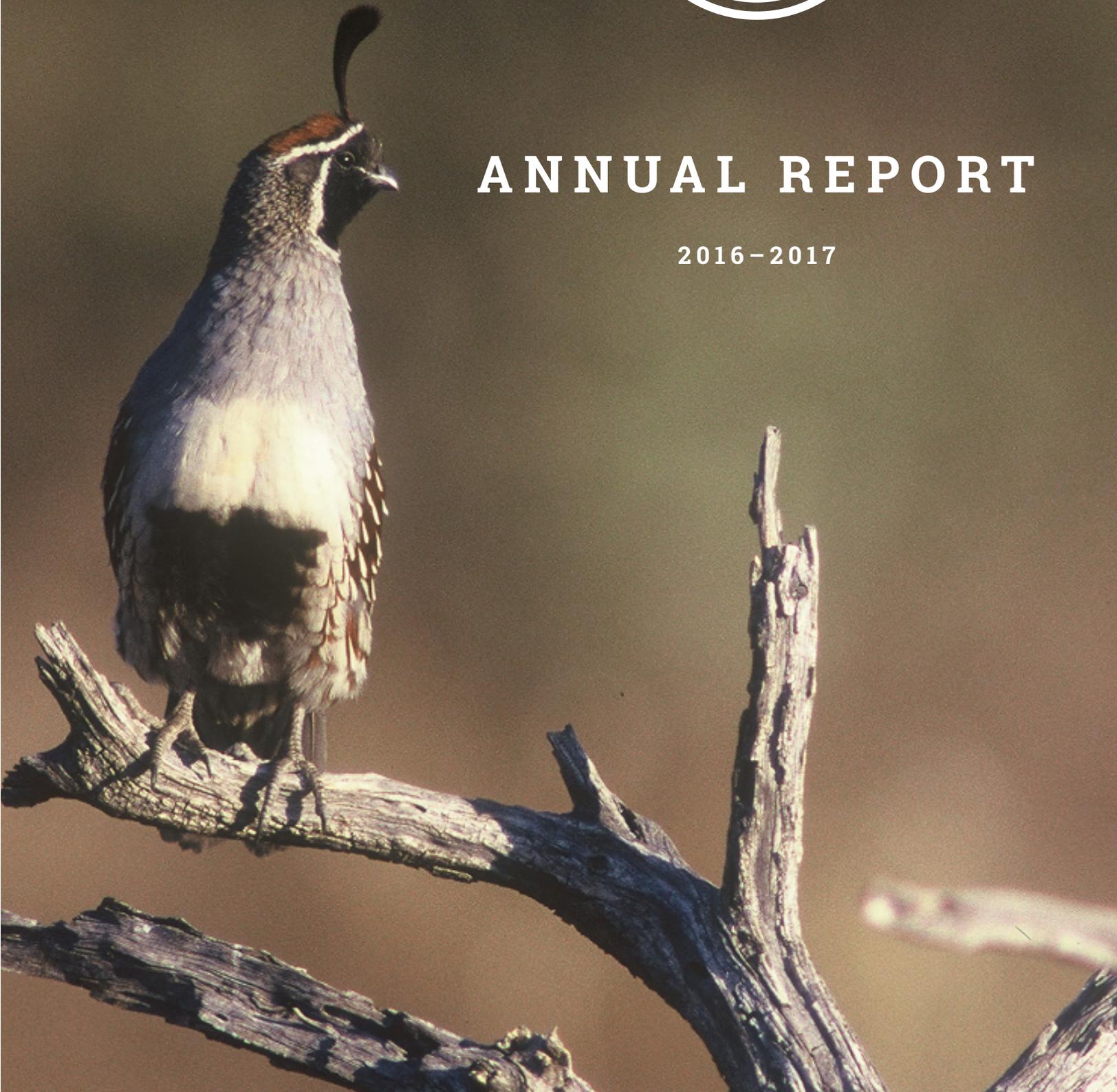




# ANNUAL REPORT

2016-2017



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## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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### TY GRAY NAMED NEW DIRECTOR UPON LARRY VOYLES' RETIREMENT

The Arizona Game and Fish Commission in June appointed Ty Gray as the new Director of the Game and Fish Department to succeed retiring Director Larry Voyles. Voyles had a distinguished 43-year career with the agency, the last nine as Director. His tenure will be remembered for his embrace of technology to modernize the Department, his national efforts to unite state conservation agencies to provide better resources for wildlife and habitat management, and his support of multiple use of public lands. Gray, of Phoenix, has been with Game and Fish for 24 years and has served as the agency's Deputy Director since 2013. He began his career with the Department as a research biologist in 1993 and served in numerous positions, including Fisheries Branch Chief, Education Branch Chief, and Assistant Director, Information/Education/ Recreation Division.

### 2017 OUTDOOR EXPO ONE FOR THE RECORD BOOKS

For the second straight year, the Arizona Game and Fish Department's Outdoor Expo—the state's largest free outdoor expo—set an all-time attendance record. The event, presented by Shikar-Safari Club International, drew 46,600 visitors over the March 25-26 weekend at the Ben Avery Shooting Facility in Phoenix. That shattered the previous two-day weekend record of 41,100, set in 2016. A "Youth Day" held March 24 attracted 1,800 students, teachers and chaperones, bringing the three-day total to 48,400, also a record. The Expo combines conservation, recreation and industry into a welcoming environment for the public. Visitors have plenty of hands-on opportunities to try out archery, shooting sports and family fishing, and they can also see live wildlife displays, watch exciting cowboy mounted shooting competition, learn about OHV and boating safety, get tips from local experts, and visit with more than 150 sportsmen's/conservation organizations, gun clubs, government agencies, and commercial vendors selling outdoor products and services.



TY GRAY



OUTDOOR EXPO

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## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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### BIGHORN RELEASE



## DESERT BIGHORN SHEEP TRANSLOCATED TO GOLDFIELD MOUNTAINS

The next time you're out hiking or just meandering in the Goldfield Mountains, take a good look around. If you're lucky, maybe way up high on the crags, you'll see one or more of the area's newest residents taking a good look at you. The Arizona Game and Fish Department in the fall translocated 14 adult desert bighorn sheep—four rams and 10 ewes—from a healthy population of the animals near Saguaro Lake in Game Management Unit 24B to the Goldfield Mountains, also in Unit 24B. The animals were given an identification ear tag and complete health evaluation before being released. A few were fitted with a GPS tracking collar to better

monitor their movements in their new locale. The translocation was no small operation and was done to establish a subpopulation within their native range. The project was a cooperative effort between the Department and its partners: Arizona Desert Bighorn Sheep Society, Mogollon Sporting Association, Tonto National Forest, and the Arizona State Land Department.

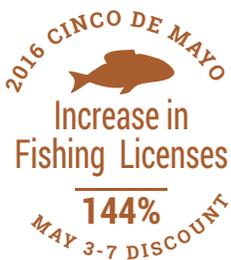
*(above) Fourteen adult desert bighorn sheep were translocated to the Goldfield Mountains to establish a subpopulation in their native range.*

## 2016 MEXICAN WOLF POPULATION SURVEY REVEAL GAINS IN POPULATION

The Mexican Wolf Interagency Field Team (IFT) completed the annual year-end population survey, documenting a minimum of 113 Mexican wolves in the wild in Arizona and New Mexico at the end of 2016. This compares with a minimum of 97 wild wolves in 2015. The population is showing an increase in wild-born wolves, and Department biologists are hopeful the growth rates observed this year will continue into the future. In spring 2016, the IFT successfully cross-fostered six genetically diverse pups from the captive breeding program into similarly aged litters of established packs in the wild. Cross-fostering was first implemented in 2014 when a male and female pup were placed in the Dark Canyon pack's den in New Mexico. Last summer, the IFT observed the cross-fostered male disperse from his pack, and it is traveling with a female wolf. The IFT also confirmed the cross-fostered female is now the breeding female in the Leopold pack.

## LICENSE DISCOUNT PROMOTIONS CONTINUE TO SHOW SUCCESS

AZGFD continued to run periodic license discount campaigns that have resulted in a lift in license sales and revenues compared with the same time frames last year.



The Department ran a “Cinco de Mayo Special” campaign from May 3-7 which offered a \$5 discount on a resident or nonresident general fishing license purchased online. When compared to the same five-day time period last year, online general fishing license sales from May 3-7

increased 144% and revenue increased 111%. The Department has the ability to conduct discount campaigns thanks to 2013 legislation that allowed the Arizona Game and Fish Commission to simplify the license structure and set prices. The Department also conducted a campaign to promote fishing in general (no license discount), emphasizing the fact that the Department was stocking a quarter-million more rainbow trout, catfish, bass and sunfish statewide through June.



*A biologist takes a sedated Mexican wolf captured from the wild population for a health exam before it is re-released back into the wild.*

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## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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### AZGFD OFFICIALS HONORED BY THE WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE AGENCIES

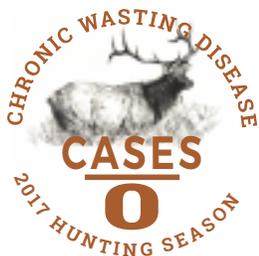
The Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) in July honored four leaders from the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AZGFD) for their conservation efforts. Craig McMullen, now the Assistant Director for Field Operations, received the WAFWA Professional of the Year Award for achievements during his 24-year career with AZGFD. The President's Award was presented to the Mule Deer Working Group (MDWG), which is led by AZGFD's Wildlife Science Coordinator, Jim Heffelfinger. The group develops strategies to assist in the management of mule deer populations throughout the west, works to improve communication among mule deer biologists, and provides a forum to respond to information needs from agencies. Wildlife Recreation Branch Chief Scott Lavin received the Contributor of the Year Award for his work on WAFWA's Hunter, Angler, Shooting Sports and Wildlife Recreation Participation Workgroup. Lavin's efforts in Arizona continue to maintain a longstanding and active statewide R3 collaboration with strong industry support. Recently retired AZGFD Director Larry

Voyles was awarded with a WAFWA lifetime membership for his career accomplishments and service to the Department.



*Left to right: Former Director Larry Voyles, Recreation Branch Chief Scott Lavin, Assistant Director for Field Operations Craig McMullen, and Wildlife Science Coordinator Jim Heffelfinger*

### NO CASES OF CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE REPORTED IN ARIZONA DEER AND ELK



The Arizona Game and Fish Department did not find any cases of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in the 750-plus deer (mule and white-tailed) and elk that were harvested by hunters and voluntarily submitted for testing in 2016. CWD is a neurodegenerative wildlife disease that is fatal to deer and elk. Game and Fish has been testing for the presence of the disease in Arizona since 1998. Although CWD has been found in the neighboring states of Utah, New Mexico and Colorado, the disease has not yet been detected in Arizona.

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## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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### GAME AND FISH OFFICERS KEEP ARIZONA'S WATERWAYS SAFE AS PART OF OPERATION DRY WATER

Arizona Game and Fish Department officers made contact with hundreds of boaters the weekend before the Fourth of July as part of Operation Dry Water, a national awareness and enforcement campaign that targets people who are operating a boat or watercraft while under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs. Alcohol is a top factor contributing to recreational boater deaths, and the initiative's goal was to increase safety on Arizona's lakes and rivers and reduce the number of fatalities and injuries. This year's weekend of enhanced enforcement took place June 30 to July 2, in advance of the Fourth of July, which fell on a Tuesday. During those three days, AZGFD officers stopped 812 boats, 74 of which had a designated driver. Three arrests were made for operating watercraft under the influence, 94 citations were written, and two individuals were arrested for driving motor vehicles under the influence. Statewide, 89 AZGFD officers participated in the initiative.

“The Operation Dry Water effort was part of a national awareness and enforcement campaign targeting watercraft operators under the influence of alcohol or drugs.”

### UPGRADES MADE TO BEN AVERY SHOOTING FACILITY'S MAIN RANGE

Multiple improvements greeted recreational shooters visiting the main range at the Arizona Game and Fish Department's Ben Avery Shooting Facility in August, after a brief closure to conduct the renovations. The work included: Raising and leveling earthen berms that serve as backstops for 67 shooting stations for increased safety; work on target bumpers (which hold up the target frames) with re-stenciled lane numbers; and, refurbishing the shooting benches. Altogether, \$100,000 of improvements were made. The projects were paid for with funding from the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program (WSFR). The Arizona Game and Fish Department does not receive general funds from the State of Arizona. Located on 1,650 acres in north Phoenix, the Ben Avery Shooting Facility is one of the nation's largest publicly-operated shooting facilities, drawing more than 120,000 shooters each year. The facility is a Phoenix Point of Pride and has received a five-star rating from the National Association of Shooting Ranges.



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## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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### AZGFD EXCHANGES MORE THAN 700 OLD LIFE JACKETS FOR NEW ONES IN 2017

More than 700 old life jackets were replaced with new ones during life jacket exchange events held throughout Arizona this year. The Arizona Game and Fish Department's Boating Safety Education program worked with volunteers and partners at Lake Havasu, Lake Mohave, Lake Pleasant, Lake Powell, Canyon Lake and Saguaro Lake during eight events to swap 734 old or incorrectly sized life jackets for brand new, fully functioning life jackets in the person's appropriate size. The exchange events, which began in 2008, aim to encour-

age everyone to stay safe out on the water by always wearing a life jacket – whether on a boat, paddleboard, kayak or canoe. All boats in Arizona must have a life jacket aboard for every passenger, and those 12 years old and younger must wear a life jacket at all times, under state law. AZGFD partnered with the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, Mohave County Sheriff's Office, Lake Havasu City Police Department and numerous volunteers to make the exchanges possible. The new life jackets were purchased with U.S. Coast Guard funding.

### ARIZONA BIG GAME SUPER RAFFLE NETS RECORD \$673,600 FOR WILDLIFE

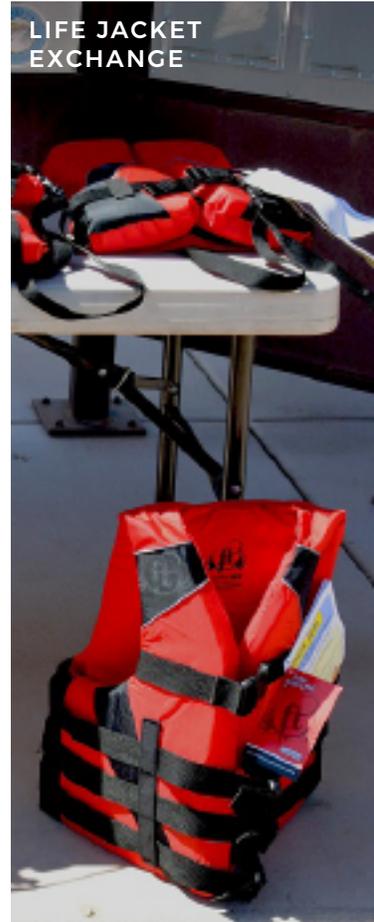
The 12th annual Arizona Big Game Super Raffle generated a record \$673,600 for wildlife conservation, topping the \$633,750 raised in 2016. Each year the Arizona Game and Fish Commission awards the Super Raffle a hunt tag for each of the state's big game species—bighorn sheep, elk, mule deer, white-tailed deer, pronghorn, bison, turkey, bear, javelina and mountain lion. Raffle tickets range from \$5 to \$25, depending on the species. Every dollar raised for each species through the raffle is

returned to the Department and managed by the Arizona Habitat Partnership Committee (AHPC) for that particular species. With input from local habitat partners across the state and sponsoring organizations involved in the fundraising, project priorities are determined that will provide the most benefit to each species. In the 12-year history of the raffle, more than \$6.1 million has been raised for wildlife and wildlife management in Arizona.

### MILITARY, FIRST RESPONDERS RECEIVE DISCOUNT AT BEN AVERY CLAY TARGET CENTER



As a salute to those who keep everyone safe, the Ben Avery Clay Target Center announced that the first Thursday of every month will be "Military and First Responders Appreciation Day." Beginning Oct. 5, all military members (active, reserve and retired) and first responders (all law enforcement, EMTs) will receive a discounted rate when purchasing a round(s) of trap, skeet or sporting clays, or an archery day-use pass. Proof of service is required. The Center is a professionally managed public shotgun-shooting facility, located at 5060 W. Skeet St. (about 1.5 miles west of Interstate 17 on West Carefree Highway) in north Phoenix.



*More than 700 old life jackets were replaced with new ones during life jacket exchange events held throughout Arizona in 2017.*

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## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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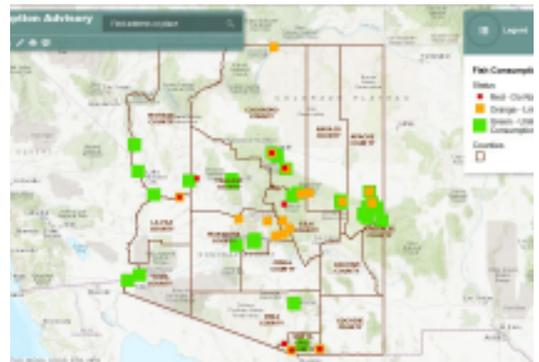
### AZGFD STUDY: SOCIAL TOLERANCE, GENETIC DIVERSITY EQUALLY IMPORTANT FOR MEXICAN WOLF RECOVERY

The success of Mexican wolf recovery across Arizona and New Mexico may hinge more immediately on maintaining social tolerance than on genetic diversity, according to a recently published peer-reviewed study by Arizona Game and Fish Department biologists. The study was published in *Biological Conservation*, a leading international conservation science journal. In it, the authors conclude that maximizing genetic diversity in Mexican wolf recovery must be strategically balanced against impacts and concerns from local communities or the entire recovery program might be compromised. This is significant because some advocacy groups contend that the best solution to wolf recovery is to simply release

additional captive-raised adult wolves into the wild. While that could increase genetic diversity, the study shows that captive wolves are more habituated to humans and thus are prone to getting into conflicts, which erodes public support for the wolf recovery program. The inexperience of captive-raised wolves reduces their overall survival and limits their ability to pass their genes on to the next generation. The authors state that “cross-fostering”—a technique where captive wolf pups are placed into a wild-born litter of the same age to be raised in the wild—is a viable means for increasing genetic diversity in the wild Mexican wolf population and can help to reduce potential wolf-human conflicts.

### GREEN LIGHT, GO FISH: “GREEN LIGHT” LIST OF FISH TO EAT WITHOUT RESTRICTIONS, INCLUDING ALL TROUT, RELEASED

For the first time, the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AZGFD) and Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) have launched an initiative to highlight a “green light” list of fish species from specific waters that may be consumed without limits. Arizona has a total of 220 waters that AZGFD manages for trout, making up approximately 40,000 surface acres of lakes and 1,000 miles of rivers or streams. AZGFD and ADEQ tested a wide variety of fish throughout the state for mercury, the most common contaminant found in edible fish fillets nationwide. This testing identified fish to avoid (red light) and fish that can be eaten in limited amounts (orange light). Anglers have been routinely informed about consumption advisories, but never which fish species at which locations can be caught, eaten and enjoyed without limits. Fresh fish from Arizona’s lakes, rivers and streams can be an important part of a healthy diet. Fish contain high-quality protein and other essential nutrients, are low in saturated fat, and contain omega-3 fatty acids. The map is located at <https://bit.ly/2y8SRaX>.



“... A new website highlights a “green light” list of fish species from specific waters that don’t have recommended consumption limits: <https://bit.ly/2y8SRaX>”

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## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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### TEXT-DONATION CAMPAIGN ASKS PUBLIC TO ‘BE A HERO FOR WILDLIFE’

AZGFD conducted a “Be a Hero for Wildlife” donation campaign to give the public an opportunity to support the Department’s efforts to treat sick, injured, orphaned, and confiscated wildlife by texting CRITTER to 41444 from any smartphone. The campaign involved educating the public about the cost that comes with taking care of these animals at the AZGFD Wildlife Center. Many require extensive medical treatments, X-rays, monitoring and specialized care, and those expenses are considerable. The public was also informed that AZGFD does not receive any Arizona general fund tax dollars. Funding raised through the “Be a Hero for Wildlife” campaign will be used to care for the animals being rehabilitated as well as the many animal ambassadors—such as a great-horned owl, golden eagle, desert tortoises and prairie dogs—that are used in educational outreach statewide. The animal ambassadors are those that can’t be re-released back to the wild and are used in educational presentations to schools and the general public.



*A donation campaign gave the public an opportunity to provide monetary support to help care for sick or injured wildlife at AZGFD's Wildlife Center.*

## ARIZONA'S BALD EAGLES EXPAND BREEDING SITES IN 2017



Arizona's bald eagle population continues to soar as the number of breeding areas expanded statewide and a record 82 young hatched during the 2017 breeding season, according to an annual Arizona Game and Fish Department survey. While the number of hatchlings rose from the previous high of 79 in 2016, the number of young that actually fledged dipped slightly to 63 birds that made the important milestone of their first flight. In Arizona, at least 95 eggs were laid, which was

slightly less than the 97 laid in 2016, and a record 85 breeding areas were identified, including two new areas. Arizona's bald eagle populations have flourished since 1978, when 11 pairs were counted within the state and the species was listed as endangered. Today there are an estimated 67 adult breeding pairs. Bald eagles in Arizona were removed from the federal Endangered Species Act in 2011. The Department's conservation efforts as part of the Southwest Bald Eagle Management Committee contributed to the species recovery. Nationally, the birds remain protected by the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.

## NATIVE FISH PROJECT—25 YEARS IN MAKING—COMES TO FRUITION

The Arizona Game and Fish Department and its partners, Tonto National Forest (TNF) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in May stocked endangered Gila topminnow into Arnett Creek, part of a long-term project to re-establish a native fish community in the creek. The partners first recognized the opportunity back in the 1990s. They re-evaluated the stream in 2007 and determined that the small amount of habitat was most suitable for longfin dace and endangered Gila topminnow. Longfin dace were stocked in 2007, and they have established a population. The partners recently moved ahead with the reintroduction of Gila topminnow, which were collected from a pond near Amado owned by one of the partners in topminnow conservation under the Safe Harbor Agreement for Topminnows and Pupfish.

## JAGUAR PHOTOGRAPHED IN ARIZONA'S COCHISE COUNTY

The third jaguar documented by a trail camera in southern Arizona since 2012 was photographed by a Bureau of Land Management trail camera in Cochise County. Five Arizona Game and Fish Department scientists independently completed an analysis of the photo, comparing the jaguar's spot patterns to other jaguars sighted previously in Arizona. They concluded that this animal has not been previously identified. The sex of the jaguar was not able to be determined by the photo. Since 2012, an increase in trail camera monitoring of mountainous habitat in southern Arizona has provided increased documentation and a better understanding of jaguar presence and habitat preferences. A male jaguar was repeatedly documented in the Whetstone and Santa Rita Mountains between 2011 and 2015. Another male has been twice photographed in the Huachuca Mountains in December 2016 and January 2017. Jaguars have been protected in the U.S. as endangered under the Endangered Species Act since 1997.



BALD EAGLE NEST



GILA TOPMINNOW PROJECT



JAGUAR

## ENDANGERED GILA TOPMINNOW RETURNS TO SANTA CRUZ RIVER

After an absence of more than 70 years, the endangered Gila topminnow has reappeared in the Santa Cruz River in northwest Tucson. Scientists were hopeful native fish would return to the river near Tucson after the river's water quality significantly improved following upgrades to wastewater treatment facilities releasing effluent (highly treated wastewater) into the river at Agua Nueva and Tres Rios treatment plants in 2013. The native Arizona species, listed under the Endangered Species Act, was rediscovered in the Santa Cruz River near Nogales, Arizona in 2015. Both sections of the river where the fish reappeared depend on releases of effluent, demonstrating the critical role this water plays for the river's health. Scientists and residents have eagerly awaited the fish's return as the river's water quality continually improves in this reliably flowing stretch.

## CHIRICAHUA LEOPARD FROGS RELEASED TO BOLSTER ENDANGERED WILD POPULATIONS

Chiricahua leopard frogs received extra help getting the hop on avoiding extinction after 454 of the threatened species were released into restored habitat on the Clifton Ranger District on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest. The young frogs were released under a partnership between AZGFD, Arizona Center for Nature Conservation—Phoenix Zoo, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management New Mexico, U.S. Forest Service, USDA Agricultural Research Service Jornada Experimental Range, Turner Endangered Species Fund, and New Mexico Game and Fish Department. "This project is a huge success toward safeguarding this species for future generations," said AZGFD biologist Audrey Owens. "The Chiricahua leopard frog nearly vanished from eastern Arizona due to habitat degradation, but these dedicated agencies and local ranchers each worked collaboratively to help restore wetland habitats in 2016. This important work has given this animal a true fighting chance."



## AZGFD APPLAUDS FEDERAL DECISION TO WITHDRAW PROPOSED ESA LISTING OF TWO FISH SPECIES

The Arizona Game and Fish Department applauded the April 7 decision by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to withdraw its proposal to list two minnows in the Lower Colorado River Basin—the headwater chub and a distinct population segment (DPS) of the roundtail chub—as threatened species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The Service's decision came as a result of new scientific classification information that in 2016 led the American Fisheries Society and the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists Joint Committee on the Names of Fishes—the recognized authority on fish taxonomy—to consider the headwater chub and roundtail chub (and the Gila chub,

which is currently listed as endangered), to be a single species: the roundtail chub. In September 2016, the Joint Committee concluded there is no morphological or genetic data that define populations of roundtail chub in the lower Colorado River basin as members of more than one species. The decision is seen as a huge win for chub and for those who manage and conserve them. The taxonomic history of this species has been debated for decades, which has influenced AZGFD's management strategies and constrained its ability to implement conservation on a range-wide basis. The decision will open doors to more opportunities to protect and conserve chub in Arizona.

## HOMES FOR SPORT FISH: HABITAT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT UNDERWAY AT ROOSEVELT LAKE

A first step in placing fish habitat into the central Arizona reservoirs took place on April 20 at Roosevelt Lake when Arizona Game and Fish Department biologists dropped “Fishiding HighRise” structures made of environmentally-safe PVC to the bottom of the lake. These 8-foot-tall recycled items make excellent habitat for crappie. For anglers, this Tonto National Forest Lakes Habitat Improvement Project will result in better fishing for generations to come in the region’s most popular fishing lakes. Natural and artificial habitat are critical for fish spawning, recruitment, and growth. The reservoirs of central Arizona lack sufficient hiding and ambush cover and habitat for growth and survival of young fish. The artificial structures provide a surface for microscopic animals to grow, which attracts bait fish and in turn the predatory fish for anglers to target.

(right) *Biologists placed “Fishiding HighRise” structures made of environmentally-safe PVC in Roosevelt Lake to enhance habitat for crappie and other species.*



## NORTHERN AZ PRAIRIE DOG BURROWS DUSTED TO COMBAT PLAGUE

AZGFD and Kaibab National Forest staff in September applied insecticidal dust to Williams and Flagstaff-area Gunnison prairie dog holes because fleas tested near the Red Lake area north of Williams tested positive for plague, a potentially fatal disease that could eradicate prairie dog colonies. Plague-infected fleas were also found at an AZGFD research plot at Garland Prairie near Flagstaff. Crews dusted prairie dog holes across 664 acres near Red Lake about 10

miles north of Williams, and an additional 800 acres were dusted near Garland Prairie. Plague is carried by fleas which spread the disease through host animals. An infestation can prove detrimental to prairie dog populations because they are highly communal animals, and the disease spreads easily in a colony. That is why it is important to identify an infected colony and dust it with insecticide to reduce the risk of infection to other animals and people.

## AZGFD HELPS RESCUE POPULATION OF NATIVE GILA TROUT FOLLOWING FRYE FIRE

During the aftermath of the 48,000-acre Frye fire, 13 biologists and wildlife managers from Arizona Game and Fish and Mora National Fish Hatchery transported 79 Gila trout (a rare trout species native to Arizona and New Mexico) from Ash Creek and 111 from Frye Creek in good health to the Mora National Fish Hatchery in New Mexico. The rescue came just before monsoon season when summer rains are likely to send ash flows toxic to fish down waterways following high-density wildfires such as the Frye fire. The

Gila trout, listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act, is one of two native trout species in Arizona, along with the Apache trout. All Gila trout rescued were held at Mora National Fish Hatchery. The fish from Frye Creek will be used to supplement the South Diamond brood stock. The fish from Ash Creek were to be held at the hatchery until an alternative stream was identified, or if conditions in the creek were deemed suitable for the fish following post-monsoon evaluations.



## U.S. REP. GOSAR LEADS U.S. HOUSE COMMITTEE PASSAGE OF BI-PARTISAN GRAND CANYON BISON MANAGEMENT ACT

The U.S. House Natural Resources Committee in September voted to pass the Grand Canyon Bison Management Act, attaching it as an amendment to the larger Sportsman’s Heritage and Recreational Enhancement (SHARE) Act. The bi-partisan bill would allow the Department to better manage and conserve the bison population within Grand Canyon National Park. It was introduced in June by U.S. Rep. Paul Gosar and requires the U.S. Department of Interior and the Arizona Game and Fish Commission to coordinate on a plan that would allow sportsmen holding a valid state-issued hunting license to assist in management of the bison population within the park. The amendment follows the release of a National Park Service plan that allows public volunteers to assist in culling an overpopulation of bison on the North Rim of Grand Canyon National Park. Wildlife surveys estimate that about 600 bison have migrated into the park, where hunting is prohibited, and the bison are impacting both natural and cultural resources. Left unclear with the current National Park Service plan is whether a licensed, skilled volunteer would be allowed to harvest and keep the entire animal. The Service stated previously that it was legally prohibited from conveying the harvested animal to a private hunter. Approval of the Bison Management Act will provide clear legal direction that allows skilled volunteers to keep the entire animal when leaving the park.

“Work continues on the bipartisan Grand Canyon Bison Management Act, which if passed by Congress would allow AZGFD and the National Park Service to better manage the bison population at Grand Canyon National Park.”

## AZGFD REVIEWING FEDS' MEXICAN WOLF RECOVERY PLAN

The Arizona Game and Fish Department is reviewing the Mexican wolf recovery plan released in late November by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Department scientists had earlier reviewed and offered comment on the Service's draft plan released in June. While the draft plan appeared to address the substance of AZGFD's lawsuit filed in June 2015, outlining several key strategic acknowledgements to ensure the success of Mexican wolf reintroduction (including the recognition of Interstate 40 in Arizona and New

Mexico as the appropriate northern boundary for recovery encompassing all of this wolf's historical range, as well as recognition of the critical role Mexico plays in any recovery effort within the U.S.), the Department will carefully review the final plan. AZGFD's involvement in Mexican wolf conservation began in the mid-1980s. Since that time, the Department has spent more than \$7 million on wolf recovery in the state and has been the predominant on-the-ground presence working to manage Mexican wolves.

## SURVEYS OF ENDANGERED MOUNT GRAHAM RED SQUIRREL SHOW DECLINE DUE TO IMPACTS FROM THE FRYE FIRE

An annual survey of the endangered Mount Graham red squirrel showed a significant decline due to the effects of the lightning caused Frye Fire in the Pinaleno Mountains of southeastern Arizona. The annual survey, conducted jointly by AZGFD, Coronado National Forest, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Arizona Center for Nature Conservation—Phoenix Zoo, and the University of Arizona, resulted in an estimate of only 35 squirrels. This is a significant decrease from the 252 squirrels estimated in 2016. Evidence of the Frye Fire was observed in 95% of the surveyed locations; 80% showed at least some habitat loss, and 44% were completely burned. The subspecies was listed as endangered in 1987. Mount Graham red squirrels live only in the upper elevation conifer forests of the Pinaleno Mountains and feed primarily on conifer seeds. Biologists continue to explore new methods to conserve the species, including continued squirrel research, developing long-term forest management strategies across the fire-impacted landscape such as reseeded and planting coniferous trees, and a managed care breeding program. The Mount Graham red squirrel population peaked at about 550 animals in the late 1990s, but typically ranges between 200 and 300 individuals.



“Mount Graham red squirrels live only in the upper elevation conifer forests of the Pinaleno Mountains and feed primarily on conifer seeds.”

## BASF HOSTS “SHOT HEARD ‘ROUND THE WORLD DAY”

The Ben Avery Shooting Facility (BASF) in Phoenix served as a host range for the inaugural “Shot Heard Round the World Day” on April 19. The event invited recreational shooters to join together to symbolize the first shot fired in 1775 to mark the beginning of the American Revolution. It was 242 years to the day when the “Shot Heard ‘Round the World” was fired in the pre-dawn light in Lexington, Mass., between the colonial militia and British army, regarded as the start of the American Revolutionary War. The event was promoted at public shooting ranges across the nation and provided an opportunity to increase participation and promote the economic benefits that shooting sports provide. As recreational shooters checked in and visited BASF’s small bore range, they were connected to recreational shooting mentor groups, shooting industry manufacturers, and retailers.



## AZGFD WINS TWO ROCKY MOUNTAIN EMMY AWARDS FOR ARIZONA WILDLIFE VIEWS TV SHOW

The Arizona Game and Fish Department’s audio-visual team won two Rocky Mountain Emmy Awards for its work on the *Arizona Wildlife Views* TV show. Winners were announced by the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences Oct. 14 at an awards reception in Phoenix. Show 13 (Forest Restoration) won an Emmy in the Politics/Government Program category. David Majure was videographer, producer,

writer and editor for that show segment, Carol Lynde was a videographer, and Ben Avechuco was the show editor. Majure also won an Emmy in the Video Journalist category for his work on *The Making of a Wildlife Manager Part 1*, which followed eight recruits on their journey to become Arizona Game and Fish Department wildlife managers. Additionally, Majure received three Excellence in Craft Awards from the Outdoor Writers Association of America (OWAA). Winners were announced June 27 at OWAA’s annual conference in Missoula, Mont. “David is a consummate video producer whose storytelling talents have really raised the level of excellence of *Arizona Wildlife Views* TV,” said Information Chief Bill Andres. *Arizona Wildlife Views* is a 13-episode half-hour program that airs on Arizona PBS (Channel 8.1, or Channel 1008 on Cox Cable), and city cable channels statewide.

## “LOCAL SPORTSMEN’S GROUPS AWARDED ALMOST \$70,000 IN GRANTS

AZGFD awarded \$68,357 in grant funding to local sportsmen’s organizations to provide public, hands-on, mentored projects (such as hunt camps and outdoor skills clinics) focused on the retention of new hunters and anglers. Of 20 proposals submitted during the grant cycle, 18 were rated by a three-member panel. The grants were approved and awarded through a competitive application process that closed July 30. Arizona Game and Fish is committed to

developing and retaining the next generation of hunter-angler conservationists. A growing body of science points to the need for multiple experiences, social support and the mentoring required to develop hunter-angler conservationists. This can only be accomplished through the network of dedicated partner groups who do the boots-on-the-ground work of sharing the knowledge, skills and passion of ethical, legal hunting and fishing.

## CANYON LAKE FEATURES NEW FISHING PIER

A fishing pier was opened to the public Aug. 21 at the Boulder recreation site of Canyon Lake.

The pier is the culmination of a joint effort between the U.S. Forest Service, the Arizona Game and Fish Department and Canyon Lake Marina to remove the original, 20-plus-year-old pier damaged by storms during the summer of 2015 and replace it with a modern pier. Funding for the pier came from Forest Service fees collected at developed recreation sites, such as picnic areas, campgrounds and boat launch areas. Located at the Tonto National Forest’s Canyon Lake, the Boulder recreation site is 15 miles northeast of Apache Junction on State Route 88.



## “DESERT ROSES, TOO” SET TO BLOSSOM IN 2017-18

Everything is coming up roses for the women’s shotgun shooting program at the Ben Avery Clay Target Center. “Desert Roses, Too,” is a new level of the program for women who want to learn about advanced shotgun shooting. Participants meet every second and fourth Thursday of each month. A \$10 registration fee includes eye and ear protection, loaner shotguns, ammunition and clay targets. Desert Roses, Too is the big sister to Desert Roses, the introductory level of the program, which also charges a \$10 registration fee. Through the advanced program, women learn in-depth techniques (more than just how to shoot a shotgun), including eye coordination, various stances, different methods of breaking targets, and shooting games.



“Through the advanced program, women learn in-depth techniques (more than just how to shoot a shotgun), including eye coordination, various stances, different methods of breaking targets, and shooting games.”

## AZGFD RECEIVES GRANT TO SUPPORT DUI ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS

The Arizona Game and Fish Department received a \$9,750 grant from the Governor’s Office of Highway Safety (GOHS) to purchase DUI enforcement equipment for AZGFD officers and help ensure the safety of vehicle users across the state. The grant will also provide overtime funding for department drug recognition experts to assist with DUI enforcement projects and assist other agencies with DUI investigations. The funds that AZGFD has received from GOHS allow our officers to perform additional DUI enforcement without taking manpower or funding away from other department patrol responsibilities.



## ROOSEVELT LAKE AMONG 2017 U.S. “WATERS TO WATCH”

The National Fish Habitat Partnership has unveiled its list of seven “Waters to Watch” for 2017, a collection of rivers, streams, estuaries, lakes and watershed systems that will benefit from strategic conservation efforts to protect, restore or enhance their current condition.

Roosevelt Lake in the Tonto National Forest was listed for its collaborative partnership that has been formed to address habitat issues.

“We’re honored to have this project recognized

by the National Fish Habitat Partnership and it wouldn’t be possible without the cooperation of our outstanding partners,” said AZGFD Aquatics Branch Chief Chris Cantrell. “We hope that within the next 5-10 years anglers can enjoy higher numbers of large bass and memories that come out of Roosevelt Lake. This effort should also have a positive economic impact on local communities.”

## ARIZONA’S OPERATION GAME THIEF PROGRAM ISSUED 76 CITATIONS FOR WILDLIFE VIOLATIONS IN 2017

At the heart of the effort to eliminate and investigate poaching is the Arizona Game and Fish Department’s Operation Game Thief program, a silent witness initiative that encourages the public to report information or suspicious activity. Last year, more than 1,000 calls came into the Operation Game Thief hotline as well as 75 submissions via the online form. Those reports contributed to 76 citations being issued statewide for wildlife issues including the illegal take of big game, fishing violations and the unlawful killing of raptors. In 2017, wildlife violators were assessed \$74,500 in civil fines, and that money goes directly into the Department’s Wildlife Theft Prevention Fund, which pays for the rewards as well as promotion of Operation Game Thief. Meat from seized wildlife is inspected by Department wildlife managers and typically donated to charities for human consumption. Individuals who make a report to Operation Game Thief will remain confidential and can report anonymously if needed. The program pays rewards for information that leads to an arrest.



## FINANCIAL STATEMENT

FISCAL YEAR REVENUES BY FUND	2016-17
Game and Fish Fund .....	\$34,443,881
Watercraft Licensing Fund.....	\$4,570,616
Game, Nongame Fund .....	\$196,487
Federal Assistance (includes Matching Funds).....	\$44,907,716
Heritage Fund.....	\$10,463,864
Off-Highway Vehicle Fund .....	\$1,776,049
Capital Improvement/Conservation Dev Funds .....	\$3,441,321
Wildlife Conservation Fund.....	\$6,500,542
Indirect Cost Fund.....	\$9,274,221
Other Funds (See Detail Below) .....	\$6,614,973
<b>Total Revenue All Sources: .....</b>	<b>\$122,189,670</b>

OTHER FUNDS DETAIL:	2016-17
Federal Grants.....	(\$131,126)
Wildlife Conservation Recovery Fund .....	\$1,057,257
GF Land & Water Conservation/Recreation Dev .....	\$350
Wildlife Theft Prevention Fund.....	\$175,498
Wildlife Endowment Fund.....	\$206,538
Credit Card Clearing Fund.....	\$50,166
Trust/Donation Fund .....	\$4,887,825
Firearms Safety and Ranges Fund .....	\$48,813
Wildlife Habitat and Restoration Fund.....	\$4
Game & Fish Nevada Col Stamp.....	\$0
Game & Fish California/Col Stamp.....	(\$35)
Game & Fish Federal Duck Stamp.....	(\$24,868)
Game & Fish Big Game Permit.....	\$166,481
Game & Fish Kaibab Coop.....	\$1,254
Publications Revolving Fund .....	\$176,818
<b>Total Other Funds: .....</b>	<b>..\$6,614,973</b>

FISCAL YEAR EXPENDITURES BY FUND	2016-17
Game and Fish Fund .....	\$30,647,515
Watercraft Licensing Fund.....	\$4,946,866
Game, Nongame Fund .....	\$111,197
Federal Assistance (includes Matching Funds).....	\$47,749,748
Heritage Fund.....	\$8,312,399
Off-Highway Vehicle Fund .....	\$1,838,177
Capital Improvement/Conservation Dev Funds .....	\$3,415,762
Wildlife Conservation Fund.....	\$6,200,633
Indirect Cost Fund.....	\$5,568,019
Other Funds (See Detail Below) .....	\$4,304,616
<b>Total Expenditures All Sources: .....</b>	<b>\$113,094,932</b>

OTHER FUNDS DETAIL:	2016-17
Federal Grants.....	\$2,233
Wildlife Conservation Recovery Fund .....	\$1,007,239
Wildlife Theft Prevention Fund.....	\$186,827
Federal Economic Recovery Fund .....	(\$891)
Trust/Donation Fund .....	\$2,904,423
Firearms Safety and Ranges Fund .....	\$35,784
Publications Revolving Fund .....	\$169,000
<b>Total Other Funds: .....</b>	<b>\$4,304,616</b>

CALENDAR YEAR LICENSES AND STAMPS SOLD	2016
Resident General Fish.....	150,771
Nonresident General Fish .....	18,449
Resident General Hunt .....	53,442
Resident Combo Hunt/Fish.....	99,231
Nonresident Combo Hunt/Fish .....	26,662
Youth High Achievement Scout .....	136
Youth DLR .....	45,088
Resident Youth Combo Hunt/Fish .....	21,328
Nonresident Youth Combo Hunt/Fish.....	3,447
Resident Migratory Bird Stamp .....	15,734
Nonresident Migratory Bird Stamp.....	4,620
Resident Short-term Combo.....	18,156
Nonresident Short-term Combo .....	24,269
Migratory Bird Stamp DLR.....	32,202
Community Fishing DLR.....	4,284
Resident Community Fishing.....	1,192
Nonresident Community Fishing .....	544
<b>TOTALS .....</b>	<b>519,555</b>

CALENDAR YEAR LICENSE, TAG AND STAMP SALES	2016
Fishing.....	\$6,596,860.00
Hunting .....	\$1,987,426.00
Hunt/Fish Combo .....	\$9,923,859.00
Youth .....	\$350,259.00
Community Fishing .....	\$144,500.00
Migratory Bird Stamps .....	\$262,780.00
Short-terms .....	\$874,472.00
Permit Tags.....	\$7,787,509.00
Non Permit Tags.....	\$2,072,550.00
Application Fee Revenue .....	\$4,492,447.00
Total License, Tag, Stamp & Application Fee Revenue	34,492,662.00
Dealer Commissions .....	(\$605,651.00)
<b>Total Less Dealer Commissions .....</b>	<b>\$33,887,011.00</b>

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## THE COMMISSION

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Edward "Pat" Madden



James R. Ammons



James S. Zieler



Eric S. Sparks



Kurt R. Davis

## THE GAME AND FISH COMMISSION

Under the provisions of the Arizona Revised Statutes 17-231, the Arizona Game and Fish Commission establishes policy for the management, preservation and harvest of wildlife. The Commission makes rules and regulations for managing, conserving and protecting wildlife and fisheries resources, and safe and regulated watercraft and off-highway vehicle operations for the benefit of the citizens of Arizona. In support of the Commission's obligations, the Director, as Chief Administrative Officer, provides general supervision and control of all Department functions and activities.

The Commission is composed of five members appointed by the Governor pursuant to ARS 38-211. The Governor is assisted in the selection of Commission candidates by the Arizona Game and Fish Commission Appointment Recommendation Board.

The Commission appoints the Director of the Arizona Game and Fish Department, and the Director serves as Secretary to the Commission. No more than one Commissioner may be from any one county. No more than three may be from the same political party. Each Commissioner serves a five-year term, staggered. Commissioners customarily serve as Chair during their last year.

## OUR MISSION

To conserve Arizona's diverse wildlife resources and manage for safe, compatible outdoor recreation opportunities for current and future generations.

*The Arizona Game and Fish Department prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age, religion, or disability in its programs and activities. If anyone believes that they have been discriminated against in any of the AZGFD's programs or activities, including employment practices, they may file a complaint with the Director's Office, 5000 W. Carefree Highway, Phoenix, AZ 85086, (602) 942-3000, or with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Attn: Civil Rights Coordinator for Public Access, 5275 Leesburg Pike, MS:WSFR, Falls Church, VA 22041-3803. Persons with a disability may request a reasonable accommodation or this document in an alternative format by contacting the Director's Office as listed above.*

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## AZGFD OFFICES

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### MAIN OFFICE

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### AGENCY LEADERSHIP

Ty Gray Director  
Tom Finley Deputy Director  
Kent Komadina Special Assistant  
to the Director  
Pat Barber Executive Community Engagement  
Administrator

### ASSISTANT DIRECTORS

Jim DeVos Wildlife Management  
Craig McMullen Field Operations  
John Bullington Support Services  
Tony Guiles Information, Education  
& Recreation

### REGIONAL OFFICES

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**Region IV** – Mike Sumner, Supervisor  
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