

HIGHWAY 83 SOUTH FENCE & BABOCOMARI RANCH PASTURE FENCE PROJECTS APRIL 14-16, 2017

BY GLEN DICKENS, VP/GRANTS/PROJECTS COORDINATOR

Another successful AAF project was completed by 48 volunteers and Arizona Game and Fish Department (AZGFD) personnel in southeastern Arizona on April 14-16, 2017. We modified 2 miles of existing highway right-of-way (ROW) fence on both sides of Highway 83 in 4 zones from the Elgin School south for 4 miles. We removed the 2 bottom strands of barbed wire, replaced them with a single strand of smooth wire at a height of 16 inches and replaced all fence stays and posts as needed. This segment of modified fence will permit pronghorn to explore the grassland due west towards the Canelo Hills previously unavailable to them. *It is expected to significantly increase safer pronghorn crossing opportunities.* It plays a key part in completing the critical southern portion of the overall Santa Cruz Plains pronghorn corridor improvement project. All this work was completed on Friday the 14th.

A separate and second full project was completed on Saturday the 15th in the Babocomari Ranch West Pasture. There we removed the 2 bottom strands of barbed wire, replaced them with a single strand of smooth wire at a height of 18 inches and replaced all fence stays and posts as needed on 3.5 miles of northern pasture boundary fence. This fence had been modified in the past but included adjusting the bottom strand of barbed wire up to 16 inches. It is now to pronghorn standard with smooth wire and improved height. Up to 100 pronghorn now reside seasonally in the West Pasture up from just 17 animals in 2012. Everyone who worked on both days enjoyed multiple sightings of the resident pronghorn and we all got a surprise when a large javelina marched across the open grassland on Saturday as well.

We owe a big thanks to the Arizona Department of Transportation Tucson Office for working with the AZGFD and AAF to aid in the improvement of Pronghorn connectivity and public safety along the stretches of Highway 83 south ROW that were modified.

All fence materials for this project were purchased with National Fish and Wildlife Grant funds and this effort benefits the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant in that all labor hours, materials and mileage from this project will be used to match the AAF's \$430K 7-year grant for our "*Southeastern Arizona Grasslands Pronghorn Initiative.*" The grant has a goal of improving up to 100,000 acres of "Pronghorn habitat connectivity."

Camp was located at the Rose Tree Ranch Corrals. Thanks as always goes to Bill Brake and Al Wilcox for again agreeing to host our camp site. BBQ was served on Friday night and a delicious steak dinner was served on Saturday night provided by Mary and Bill Keebler. They hosted Saturday and Sunday morning breakfasts as well, thanks Mary and Bill!

Thanks go out to several groups of folks that contributed to this successful project;

—**Representing the AAF Board:** Al Sue, Tice Supplee, Connie Taylor, Gary Boyer, and yours truly.

—**Other AAF members and volunteers:** Dave Cruce, Bill/Mary Keebler, Betty Dickens, John Millican, Marsha Sue, Warren Adams, Ray Blanchard, Stephen Williams, Jay/Connie Leadabrand, Cecil/Vicki Rico, Brian/Alexandra Taylor, Rene Dube, Art McGinty, Caleb Thomasson, Steve Tritz, Oscar Oland, Elizabeth/David Breeden, Darrel Wood, Roger Cogan, Dan Robinette, Johnny Johnson, Ward Arntson and Keaton Davis.

—**University of Arizona Wildlife Club:** Betsy Grube, Alex Smallwood, Kalyn Miller, Summer Allen, Brianna Rico, Ben Morrison, Collen Hurkett and Alan Sandoval.

—**AZ Land and Water Trust:** Cameron Becker

—**Altar Valley Alliance:** Kyle Thompson

—**Game & Fish personnel:** Troy Christensen, Brittney Olsen, Brad Fulk and Brian Aragon.

Thank you, everyone, for your efforts!

Photos of this project on pages 5 and 6, contributed by Betty Dickens



