



# PRONGHORN

*3rd Quarter 2021*  
*Volume 27 Number 3*



# ARIZONA ANTELOPE FOUNDATION, INC.

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### AAF Mission Statement:

The Arizona Antelope Foundation is an organization dedicated to the welfare of pronghorn antelope. The Foundation's Mission is to actively seek to increase pronghorn populations in Arizona through habitat improvements, habitat acquisition, the translocation of animals to historic range, and public comment on activities affecting pronghorn and their habitat.



### ON OUR COVER

Resident photographer Betty Dickens was in the right place at the right time, catching these Does looking good after record summer '21 rains, Vera Earl Ranch, Sonoita

*Pronghorn is a quarterly magazine for the members of AAF. Letters, comments, news items, articles, pictures and stories are all welcome and will be considered for publication. Address all such items to: Lenée Landis, Pronghorn Editor, PO Box 1191, Mesa AZ 85211 or by email at info@azantelope.org.*

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Welcome to fall and I hope as usual everything is rolling along OK. We just got off a successful project in the 18A for the 5 year landscape endeavor. This included the Double O ranch, thanks Tom, North end by the Pica Camp. Thanks also to Cemex for allowing us to camp on their side of the fence in the shade of the trees. We will be heading back down South to the McDonald Ranch for a total fence removal a mile long or so. A thank you goes out to John Millican for working with the rancher to get this project up and running. We recently put the release Pen back up and should see Sonoran Antelope release shortly in Vekol Valley area.

There are many issues coming down the road in the upcoming months that everyone should take a look at. First there is our ongoing 18A project, we have ongoing great support from the land owners, Kingman office and of course our volunteers. If you have not heard, we have a proposal of 30 x 30, this at its core is preserving 30% of land and water on a global scale by 2030. The second proposal called Hunt 30 x 30 or should we say statement is for various wildlife groups founded by hunters and fishermen supporting the 30 x 30 endeavor. As the original conservationist and advocates of preserving the wild lands this is a natural step for us as a group. Another project in the works is the 2023 purchase of approximately 7800 acres of the Yavapai Ranch. This ranch is checker boarded with in the Prescott National forest and purchase will consolidate the holdings into the forest. As a side benefit it assists in the protection for the upper Verde River system.

One endeavor we can all embrace is Recruit, Retrain, Retain. Remember the future of Hunting, Fishing, and Conservation will always need new and younger people to become involved. This can bring a 10 year old into the world of the outdoors or a 30 year old back. While many people seem overindulgent with their phones, iPads, and computers, I don't think I have ever seen a frown when they are on a project, hunting, or fishing. Spread the word and let's get a new person involved.



If you don't have a tag. I hope you have dogs - quail season starts Friday.

To close out we recently lost Life Member and regular project volunteer Larry Thowe as well as one of our founders and greatest assets, Dave Brown. I spent a couple of hours with Dave in a truck a couple of years back and felt like I just completed a college course on Arizona history. Dave will be prominently featured in our 4th quarter issue of the *Pronghorn*.

Ken

"LIBERTAS AD VAGOR"....  
FREEDOM TO ROAM

# SOAPWEED PASTURE WATER DEVELOPMENT

BY JOHN MILLICAN, AAF FIELD PROJECT MANAGER



Allen Flat is located within Cochise County, 30 miles west of Willcox. Livestock grazing is the primary economic activity for the Private Ranches found within this mixed desert grassland. The valley is considered historic pronghorn habitat, along with being home for mule deer, javelina, desert quail, and an assortment of avian, reptile and mammalian species. Allen Flat is one of the 7 herd zones identified in the Arizona Ante-

lope Foundations National Fish and Wildlife Foundations Grant Report, containing 68,225 acres of Pronghorn antelope habitat.

In 2019 AAF, along with landowner partnerships, instituted fence modification projects which focused on a focal area of 29,267 acres. Initially, these efforts were geared at developing pronghorn movement corridors which improved habitat connectivity. Fence line modification consisted of either removing the bottom barbed wire strand and replacing with a smooth wire at a minimum of 16 inches from ground level, or replacement of old ranch fence with new wildlife friendly construction. A total of 11.5 miles were modified by AAF volunteers and landowners on 3 separate ranches, increasing permeability/connectivity for pronghorn and other wildlife on a minimum of 13,500 acres.

Once these movement barriers were removed, an effort to enhance water availability became the AAFs focus, particularly with elevated yearly temperatures and drought conditions affecting the Southwest. The National Weather Service climate report from Tucson indicated that 2020 was the driest year and second warmest on record. Additionally, 2 of the 5 driest years on record have occurred this century while the yearly average temperature recorded above normal stands at 22 straight years. Historically, the main source of freestanding water throughout Allen Flat has been through construction of dirt tanks. Over time, many of these tanks have silted in, and due to lack of adequate monsoon moisture and runoff have developed cracks in the bottom resulting in lack of long-term water holding capability. Instead, Ranchers have started relying on digging wells and pumping water to above ground storage tanks which gravity fed troughs.

Due to the proximity of the modified fence lines, the Soapweed Pasture, located on the 3 Links Ranch and managed by the Dobson Ranch and Cattle Company, was identified as a significant habitat enhancement area where yearlong freestanding water was limited. This pasture totals 8,040 acres of Arizona State Trust Land. Out of this total, 5,120 acres was void of perennial water, with all boundary fences being modified. The 3 Links Ranch had been working with the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) out of Willcox on developing a water project for this pasture, with partial funding and all cultural clearances already completed. Being shovel ready, AAF established a partnership with the Ranch to assist with the unfunded portion of the NRCS EQIP funding amount. All construction labor would be completed by the Ranch, along with the funding to drill a new well prior to project start.

The Soapweed Pasture Water Development project consisted of drilling a new well that was completed in November 2020, installation of a solar powered pump supplying water to 2- 10,000-gallon storage tanks, underground placement of 5.31 miles of high-density poly pipe plumbed to 4 metal troughs with installed escape ramps. Each trough provides yearlong water for wildlife and livestock and are located 1-mile apart. The dollars that were not funded through NRCS were awarded through an approved Arizona Sportsmen for Wildlife Conservation (AZSFWC) license plate grant, amounting to \$14,274.85. The total cost of this project was over \$91,000.00 with a cost share of 82%.

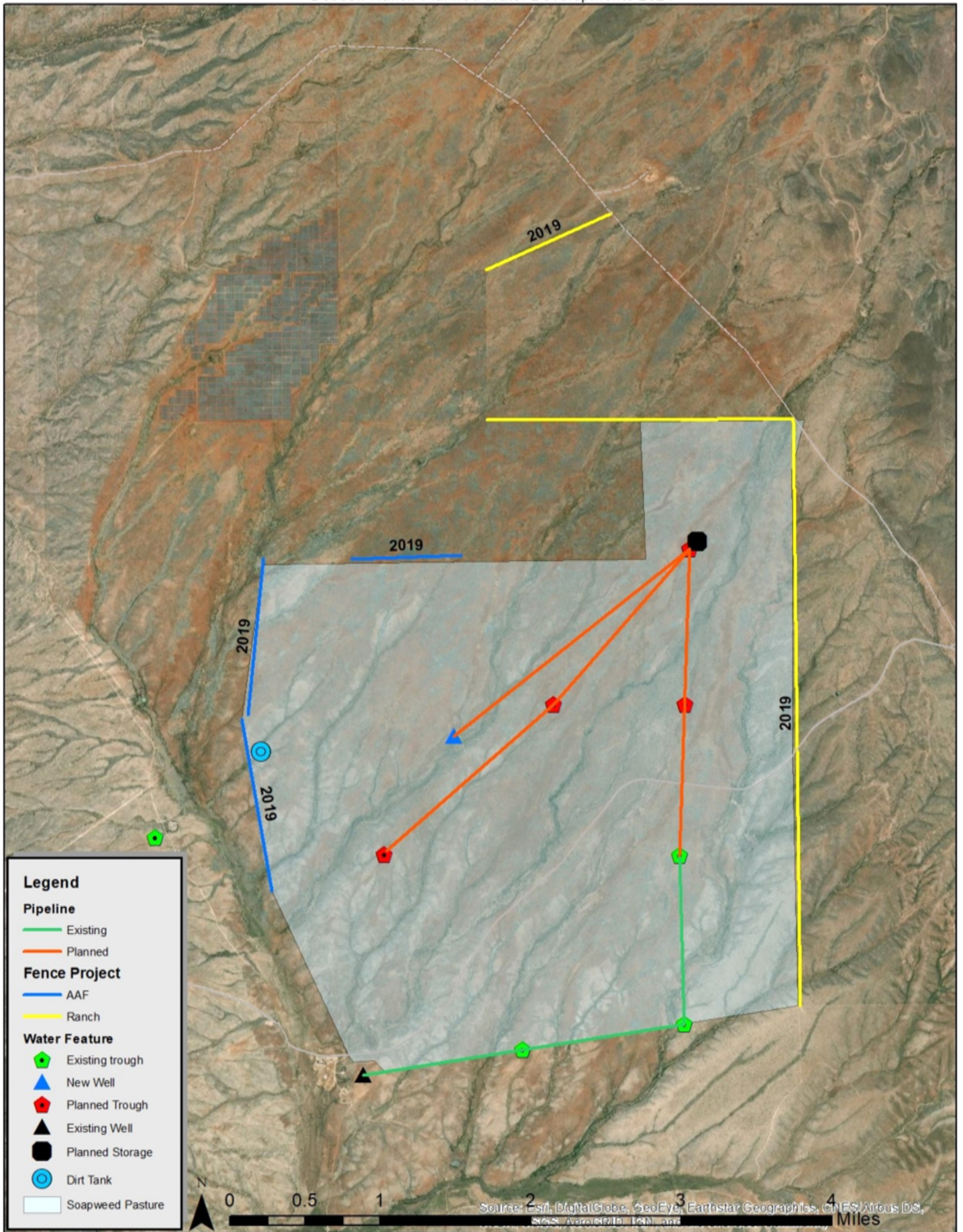
Upon completion, the met objectives were:

- Provide dependable yearlong water sources for wildlife and livestock distribution, within PR, MD and Javelina habitat.
- Increase habitat connectivity and permeability in association with ongoing efforts throughout the area.
- Improve hunter opportunity and distribution.
- Develop a system that is flexible to changing needs and conditions.
- Enhance habitat conditions through better livestock distribution.

These efforts throughout Allen Flat have shown a marked increase in the Pronghorn population. In 2019, AZGFD conducted an aerial survey recording 70 animals, which included 12 Pronghorn released in January from Prescott Valley. This is a near 3-fold increase from the 24 recorded in 2015. This is just another example of melding landscape level collaboration between volunteers, private, government, and non-government sectors working together, merging expertise and funds to enhance ecosystem health and wildlife populations.



Dobson Ranch Planned Water Developments 2019



# **NATIONAL FISH & WILDLIFE GRANT REPORT**

## **“SOUTHEASTERN ARIZONA GRASSLANDS PRONGHORN INITIATIVE” 2010-2019**

### **ALLEN FLAT HERD ZONE—68,225 Acres Excerpts from original zone report**

#### **OVERVIEW**

The Allen Flat area is considered historic pronghorn habitat. Data show pronghorn were absent by 1930. In 1943 to 1945, 70 pronghorn were reintroduced in the upper Sulphur Springs Valley (Bonita herd zone) on six different occasions. These pronghorn came from the AGFD’s Raymond Ranch Antelope Refuge east of Flagstaff. Occasional sightings of pronghorn on Allen Flat occurred in the early 1950’s. In an AGFD survey in June of 1954, 27 pronghorn were confirmed on the north end of Allen Flat, with four more observed seven air miles northwest of Allen Flat. Connectivity was identified as a possible issue when the NFWF 8-year grant began in 2012 and was confirmed by observing the movement data from 5 newly released, collared animals in the spring of 2019. These fences were addressed in 2019 as outlined in the project statements below. Water distribution is considered very secure due to multiple ranchers running pipelines from wells to dozens of livestock water troughs. Grasslands in the north half of the valley are in good condition and are maintained by rigorous grazing regimes practiced by resident ranchers. A portion of the valley’s southern acreage would benefit from mesquite treatment.

#### **PROJECTS**

##### ***September 27-28, 2019 - Allen Flat Ranch Boundaries Fence Modification & Fence Materials Purchase for 3 Ranches***

A successful AAF fence modification/removal project was completed by 27 volunteers in southeastern Arizona on Allen Flat, 20 miles northwest of Willcox in game management unit 32. Three miles of existing boundary fence on the 3-Links Ranch were modified by removing the bottom barbed wire strand and replacing it with smooth wire. Additionally, another 1.5 miles of fence on an adjoining ranch was modified by raising the smooth bottom strand up to 16 inches from a 10-inch installed height.

Separate from the work described above, the remaining \$23K of our NFWF 8-year grant funds were used to purchase 7 miles of new fence materials. Materials were delivered to the Warbonnet/Dobson Cattle and Dos S Land & Cattle ranches for 7 miles of prioritized fence removal/ replacement, including ranch boundaries and interior fences. The Allen Flat volunteer project and the fence replacement on the three ranches increased permeability/connectivity for pronghorn on a minimum of 13,500 acres. This effort was in direct proximity to where 12 captured pronghorn from Prescott Valley, Arizona were released in January 2019. Five transplant pronghorn were radio collared allowing the data to be utilized to determine where the top priority fencing choke points would need to be modified or replaced. Informed by these data, the efforts of volunteers, ranchers, and AGFD personnel have made the central 13,500 acres of Allen Flat now completely permeable to resident pronghorn (see Map #1, page 9).

## **INTENSIVE VOLUNTEER PRONGHORN GROUND SURVEYS**

### **July 21, 2018 - 1<sup>st</sup> Allen Flat Pronghorn Fawn Saturation Survey**

The 1<sup>st</sup> annual Allen Flat pronghorn fawn saturation survey was conducted in the summer of 2018. This survey involved 15 volunteers led by Region V Game Specialist, Rana Tucker and Arizona Antelope Foundation (AAF) Field Manager, John Millican. The volunteers were from both AGFD and the AAF. While the July 21<sup>st</sup> survey netted 26 pronghorn, the August 2018 AGFD aerial survey recorded 42 animals and a 28% fawn success rate. Allen Flat had only 24 pronghorn three years ago and is scheduled for a supplemental release of 15 additional animals in January of 2019.

### **July 7, 2019 - 2<sup>nd</sup> Allen Flat Pronghorn Fawn Saturation Survey**

In the summer of 2019, the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Allen Flat pronghorn fawn saturation survey was conducted. This survey involved 12 individuals led by Region V Game Specialist, Rana Tucker and AAF Field Manager, John Millican and again, included volunteers from both AGFD and AAF. The morning survey netted 32 pronghorn with a 39% fawn success rate. The August 2019 AGFD aerial survey recorded 70 animals and a 28% fawn success rate. This area had 24 pronghorn four years earlier and received a supplemental release of 12 animals in January of 2019.

## **PRONGHORN POPULATION TRANSPLANTS SURVEYS & ENHANCEMENTS**

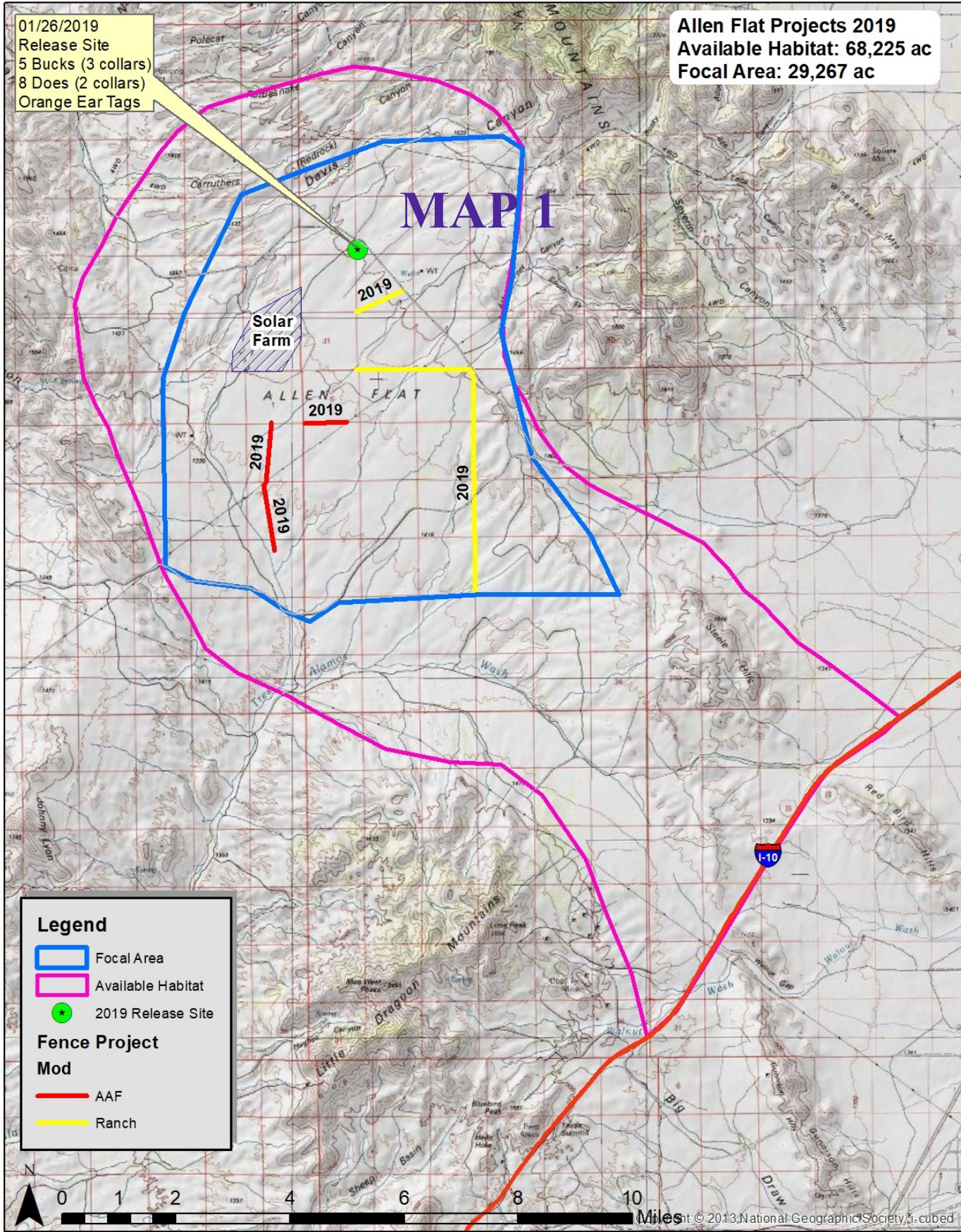
In January 2019, 12 pronghorn were captured near Prescott Valley, Arizona and released on the north end of Allen Flat. This included 5 bucks and 8 does. Five of the animals were radio collared. The radio collared pronghorn have explored all of the current occupied pronghorn habitat and have integrated themselves into the remnant population (see Map #2, page 10).

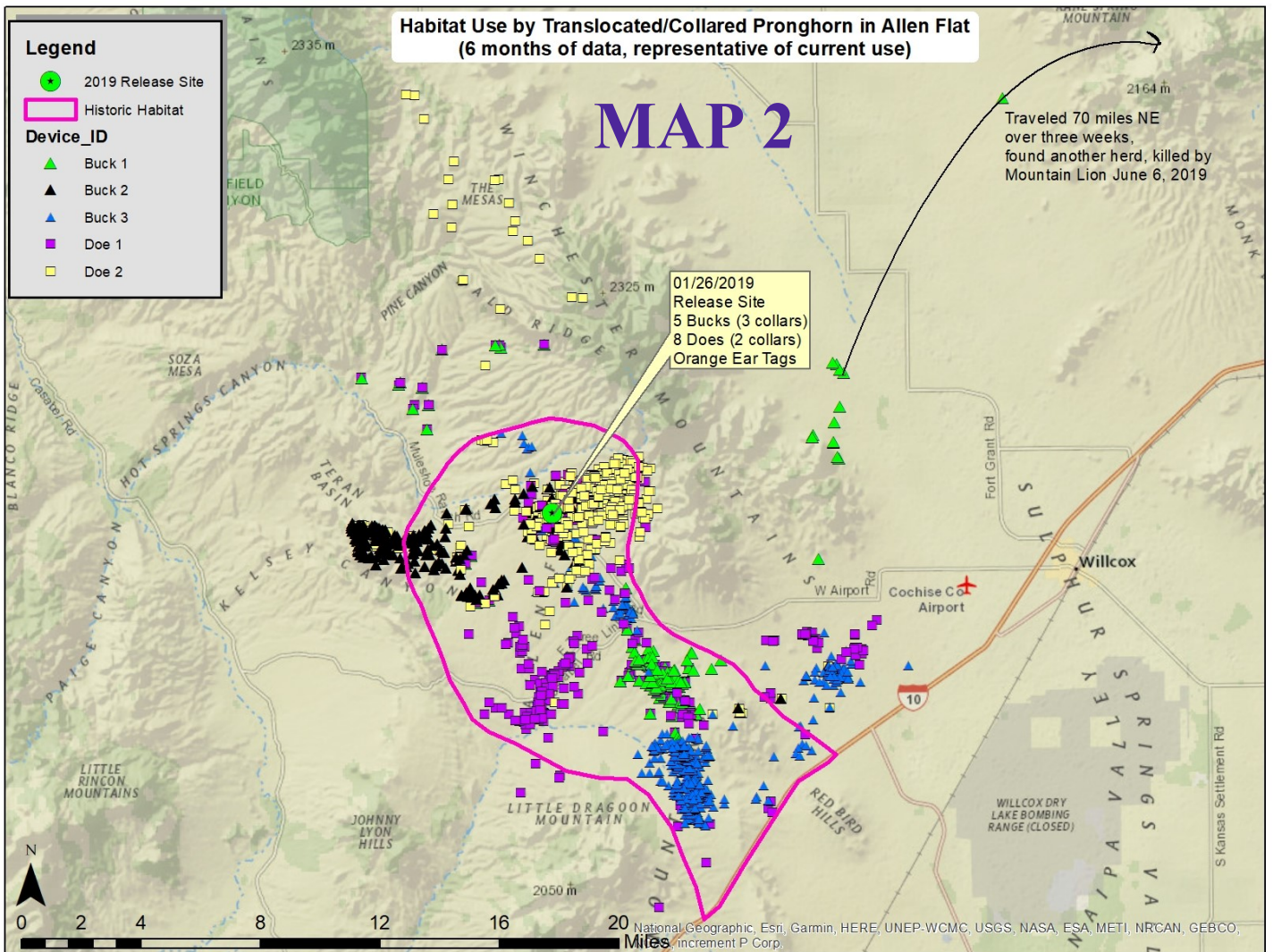
Survey data for the last 10 years have shown population numbers well below the minimum grant population objective of 125 individuals. At the beginning of the project in 2012, the number of pronghorn was 26. Currently, based on the 2019 survey, a minimum of 70 pronghorn are present (see Map #3, page 11). Following approved scientific protocols, this herd zone received seasonal pronghorn fawning enhancement coyote treatment in 2016, 2017, and 2018. We are optimistic that with these treatments and good seasonal moisture, this herd can reach the minimum population objective of 125 in 3 to 5 years.

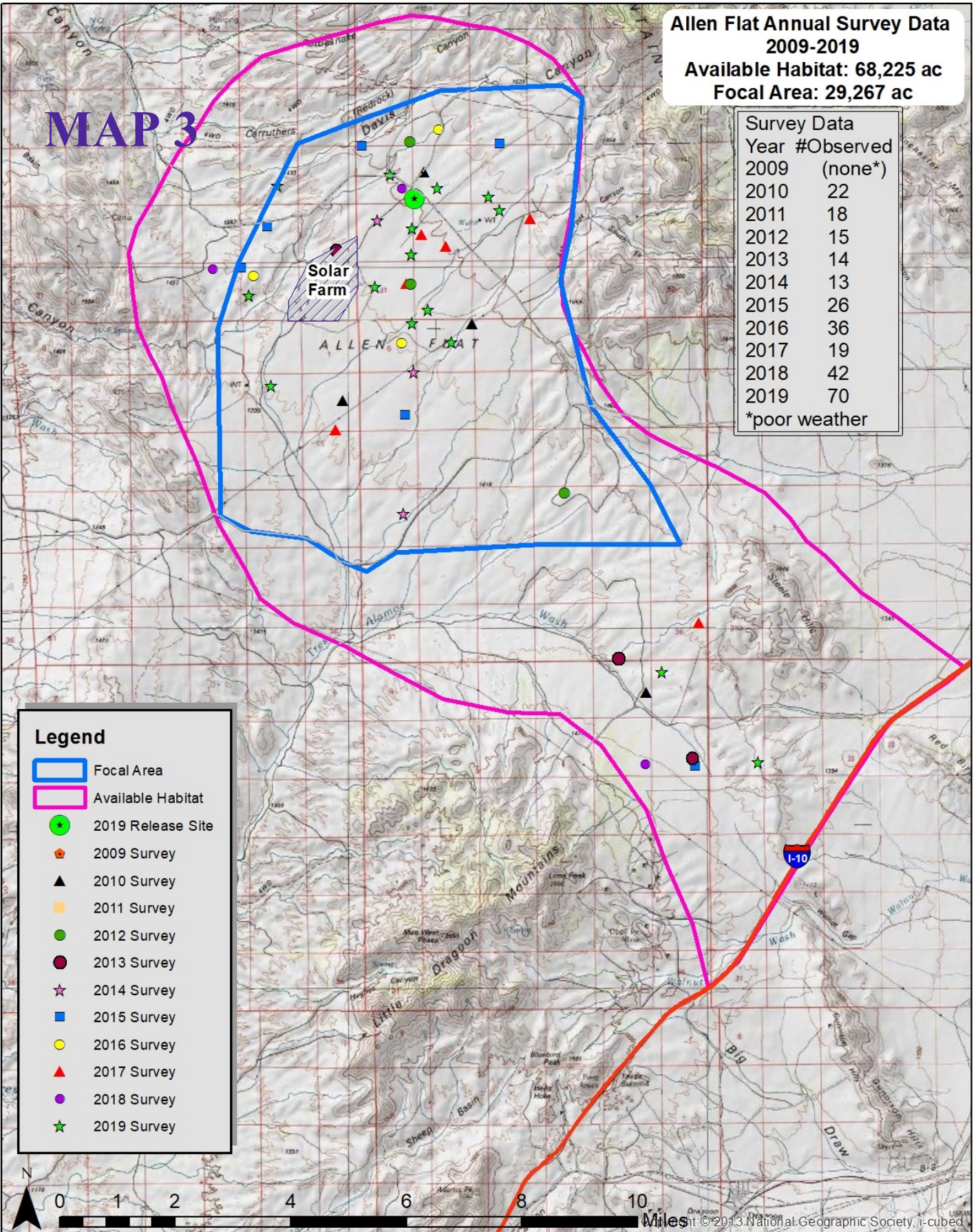


01/26/2019  
 Release Site  
 5 Bucks (3 collars)  
 8 Does (2 collars)  
 Orange Ear Tags

Allen Flat Projects 2019  
 Available Habitat: 68,225 ac  
 Focal Area: 29,267 ac







## JOE-BILL PICKRELL INDUCTED INTO THE ARIZONA HALL OF FAME

The Arizona Antelope Foundation would like to congratulate Past President and Board member Joe-Bill Pickrell who on August 21, 2021 was inducted into the Wildlife for Tomorrow-Arizona Outdoor Hall of Fame for his outstanding lifelong contributions as a wildlife volunteer. This was for 2020, but due to the cancellations last year the class of '20 and '21 were both celebrated this year. Not only is Joe-Bill part of the Antelope Foundation but he is also a member and past President of the Arizona Big Horn Sheep Society. You can always find him out on the projects and he is the principle driving force behind our successful bi-weekly fundraising raffles/sweepstakes.

According to Wildlife for Tomorrow: The Outdoor Hall of Fame honors those who have made significant contributions to Arizona's wildlife, the welfare of its natural resources, and the state's outdoor heritage.

Hats off to Joe-Bill!



# **SELIGMAN GMU 18A BOUNDARY FENCE MODIFICATION PROJECT**

**BY GLEN DICKENS, VP/PROJECTS MGR.**

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Another successful AAF fence modification project was completed by 34 volunteers on the north end of the Double O Ranch owned by Tom Liversedge 17 miles west of Seligman on September 24/26 2021 in game management unit 18A.

Split into 2 work teams we modified two 1.5 mile sections of existing large pasture boundary fences. We removed the bottom barbed wire strand and replaced with smooth at a height of 18 inches. We did metal post repair/additions as needed and replaced or added cedar wood stays on both fences. Early arrivals spent Friday afternoon prepping both fences for the Saturday work efforts.

This project directly helps the 500,000 acre 5-year, \$5M planned habitat improvements in GMU 18A being led by Wade Zarlino, Erin Butler and Cody Johnston of the Kingman AGFD Regional office. Some 137,000 acres has been identified to treat juniper encroachment and conduct browse enhancements. Based on a 5-year period they are on schedule to treat up to 50,000 acres. In addition to fence modifications/replacements to benefit resident pronghorn, multiple water enhancements and security are also being implemented. Cooperators in addition to local ranchers include the AGFD, AAF, Arizona Deer Association, Arizona Mule Deer Foundation and Arizona Elk Foundation.

Field Supervisor Cody Johnston who stayed to put final changes on the fences on Sunday happily reported a group of 10 pronghorn crossing one of the modified fences that same day. Success!!

Dinners were served on Friday and Saturday nights with the sides provided by Board members Ken Meadors, Joe-Bill Pickrell and Terry Schupp with aid from Connie Ledabrand and they hosted Saturday and Sunday morning breakfasts as well. Thanks much!

Thanks, go out to several folks that contributed to this successful project:

-Representing the AAF Board: Ken Meadors, Joe Bill Pickrell, Jamie Watkins, Terry Schupp, and yours truly.

-Representing the Az Game and Fish: Wade Zarlino, Cody Johnston, Troy Christensen, Brandon Foley, and Troy Moody.

-Other AAF members and volunteers: Betty Dickens, Dave Cruce, Al Sue, Marsha Sue, Mason Kleist, Jay Leadabrand, Connie Leadabrand, Richard Roller, Steve Tritz, Earl Polvent, Christine Murdock, Robert Marin, Jim Dickert, Cindy Dickert, Cheryl Sorrento, Glenn Bevin, Steve Rusiecki, Nic Gordon, Sadie Lee-Johnson, Deanna Watkins, Brian Taylor, Patti Riddle, Patrick Mannion, Eric Friend, Sandra Friend, Bill McClendon, Mike Ebright, Kent Krumm, Bonicole Boulier, and Michell Kiffer-Boulier.

Thanks, everyone for your efforts!

*Photos by Betty Dickens*



# *In Memoriam, Life Member*

## *Larry Steve Thowe*



AAF Life Member, regular fence project volunteer and annual Banquet attendee Larry Steve Thowe, age 74, passed away on July 19, 2021 in Page, Arizona. Larry was born on June 5, 1947 in San Antonio, Texas, to William A. Thowe and Jeralynn Goetz Thowe. Larry's mother passed soon after his birth, and for most of his life he was raised by his father and step-mother Virginia Matyear Thowe.

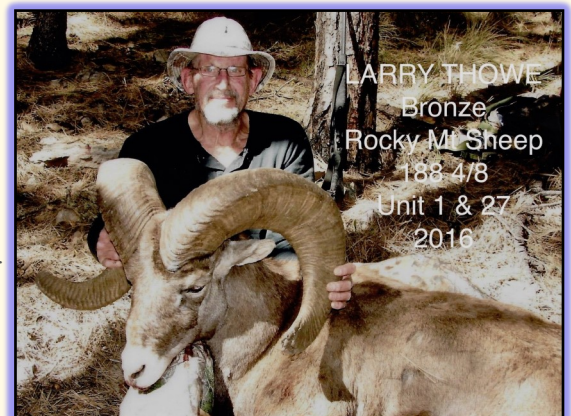
He graduated from Bossier City High School in Louisiana, and on the day after he turned 17, enrolled in the U.S. Navy. He served as an electrician on the nuclear-powered guided missile cruiser the U.S.S. Truxtun, which was the first ship to arrive in North Korea after the USS Pueblo was captured. He served for six years in the Navy before his honorable discharge in San Francisco, CA in March of 1970.

He went on to continue his higher education at the University of Texas in Austin. During this time, he also

worked for the Secretary to the Texas Senate, Charles Schnable, meeting many dignitaries during his work such as Barbara Jordan, Ben Barnes, and Francis Farenthold. In his fourth year of college, he was offered a position with the Navajo Generating Station as an electrician and instrumental technician. He moved to Page, AZ in late 1977, and worked there until his retirement in June 2002.



He lived the rest of his life in Page, volunteering on the Page Planning and Zoning Commission and the Library Board, was an active member of the local Gun Club, drove a local school bus for a time, and even spent a few years as a slow-pitch softball umpire. He flew to South Africa to photograph wildlife, was an avid hunter and conservationist, and spent the last year of his life water hauling



to dry catchments for the wildlife on the North Kaibab Plateau. Overall, he enjoyed his retirement.

He is survived by his son Thomas Dylan Thowe and his daughter-in-law Rachel of McCordsville, IN, his half-sister Helen Thowe Whitsitt of New Franklin, MO, and his half-brother Duane Thowe of Fortuna, MO. His ex-wives are Linda Thowe of Shreveport, LA and Dianne Schuler of Page, AZ. His three step-children are Jason Olson of El Jebel, CO, Brian Olson of Page, AZ, and Melissa Olson of Page, AZ.

Larry was a remarkable man, and will be missed by the many people who knew and loved him.

# 9<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL SONOITA PLAINS JULY 17<sup>TH</sup> 2021 PRONGHORN & FAWN SATURATION SURVEY

## BY GLEN DICKENS AAF VP/PROJECTS MGR.

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On Saturday July 17, 2021 volunteers from the Arizona Antelope Foundation led by Arizona Game and Fish Department personnel District Wildlife Managers Brittney Olsen, Brian Aragon and Regional Game Specialist Rana Tucker conducted our 9<sup>th</sup> annual Sonoita Plains pronghorn fawn “Saturation” survey. This entails stationing as many separate observers as possible across all the occupied pronghorn habitat in a game management unit from the crack of dawn until 10AM and observing and classifying all of the pronghorn observed and their exact locations. This time of year is when pronghorn does are at their peak of fawning/nursery herd activity.

This survey included both game management units 34A/B, east and west of Highway 83 and north of Highway 82 and 35A/B north, south of Highway 82. We had muddy/wet roads due to the very welcome 3 inches of rainfall received on the afternoon of July 16<sup>th</sup> so up to 25% of the survey zone was off limits. Still we had a very successful survey as reported here by Rana Tucker;

*“After plotting all of today's observations on a map and removing any duplicates, we produced a whopping 273 observed pronghorn! Just think what that would have been with a good fawn crop, and it also doesn't include San Rafael valley! In 34AB, we saw 134, to include 41 bucks, 79 does, 11 fawns, and 3 adult unclassified. In 35AB we saw 139, to include 33 bucks, 100 does, and 6 fawns. Together, we saw 74 bucks, 179 does, and 17 fawns (and 3 unclassified), which breaks down to 10 fawns:100 does, and 41 bucks: 100 does for the Sonoita Plains herd. THANKS so much to everyone involved! Good day to be in the field. =) “ Congrats! Rana Tucker, AGFD*

Fawning success of just 10% directly reflect the lack of a 2020 monsoon, the dry winter of 2020-21 and our unprecedented statewide drought. Science and previous Pronghorn fawn survival studies suggest such conditions will allow for 5%-15% fawn survival and we hit 10% so not unexpected.

The 2020 survey netted 218 with 274 observed in 2019, 168 observed in 2018 (low count due to rainy weather and impassible roads), 243 in 2017 and 316 during the 2016 survey. What these numbers continue to reaffirm is that the Sonoita Plains population continues to hold its own at 250+ and function as a single metapopulation. When the grant efforts began in 2010, we observed just 81 animals fragmented into 3 distinct herd zones. This is very positive data and pronghorn are now observed over the entirety of the 100K acres Sonoita Plains grassland habitat.

Camp was located at the historic Rose Tree Ranch corrals and stone bunkhouse near Elgin, thanks to Bill Brake and Al Wilcox the ranch owners for hosting us yet again. Dinner was pulled beef and served by yours truly and spouse and resident photographer Betty Dickens. We had five hunters that drew tags to hunt pronghorn in the area assisting us as well.

Thanks go to all the following AGFD partners and volunteers that contributed to the success of this survey;  
-Representing the AAF Board: Bill Keebler, Dave Cagle, Jamie Watkins, Joe Bill Pickrell, Gary Boyer, John Millican and yours truly.

-Representing the AGFD: Kirby Bristow, Rana Tucker, Brittney Oleson, Brian Aragon, Fritz Sawyer, Noah Silva and Ken Pitzlin.

Arizona Land & Water Trust: Cameron Becker

The Nature Conservancy: Ron Day

-Other volunteers included; Rick Forrest, Cameron Blair, Delvern Merrill, Lori Merrill, Jerry Clarno, Brian Bitter, Carson Bitter, Leonard Ordway, Jane Ordway, Deana Watkins, Christine Murdock, Johnny Johnson, Warren Adams, Marsha Halcrow, Betty Dickens, Dave Cruce, Mike Ebright, Darrell and Kolin Tersey.

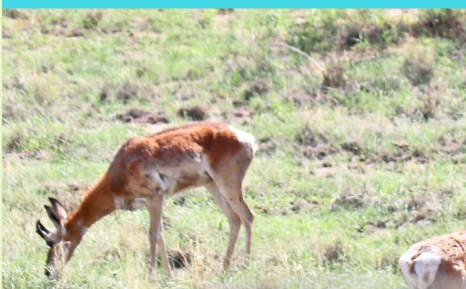
Thanks to the AGFD Tucson Regional Office for continuing/encouraging these “civilian conservationist” efforts. The AAF looks forward to continuing these “on the ground” separate Pronghorn monitoring efforts in future years.





# Sonolta Plains Saturation Survey

JULY 17, 2021



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Karl Blair, Vail	Brad Jinkins, Gilbert	
Christopher Carter, Fort Mohave	Robert Moyle, Scottsdale	
	Trica Oshant Hawkins, Tucson	

*Thank You!*



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## Hunter Success

*A 2021 AAF Hunter Clinic attendee provides inspiration for this year's attendees*

*AAF,*

*After 6 hard days of hunting, passing up multiple smaller bucks, I shot a beautiful antelope this season in northern Arizona. I would like to share it with you since I attended your seminar this year and would also like to say thank you for all the great information!*

*Jason Brack*



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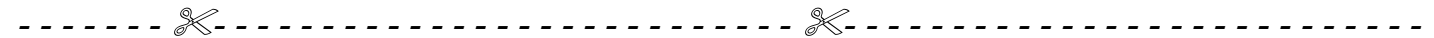
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