



With two months in the books for 2024, here's a look at what's happening across the state.

Auction Tags – The AZ Game & Fish Commission challenged wildlife conservation organizations last year to try and find some alternatives to auction tags for the Special Big Game Tag program. AZSFWC has not developed a position on this issue because we don't participate in the program. We have provided a forum for discussing the issues at several Board meetings and have shared the AZ Game & Fish Department (AZGFD) data on the subject. The Department presentations made at the January Commission meeting can be found [HERE](#) and the February meeting [HERE](#).

BIDEH – More than likely you're not familiar with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Biological Integrity, Diversity, and Environmental Health (BIDEH) rules for the National Wildlife Refuge System. The USFWS is proposing some policy revisions and new regulations. A couple notable ones that might impact Arizona refuges include the elimination of Native Predator Control, and Conservation Relocations. AZSFWC is assessing the issues and will comment on the proposals. The comment deadline has been extended until May 6th.

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/02/02/2024-02076/national-wildlife-refuge-system-biological-integrity-diversity-and-environmental-health>

Burros – Our last enews had an update on these animals and as a result we need to clarify a few things. First, AZGFD does not manage burros, as they aren't considered "native wildlife". Second, AZGFD does not use tag money for "burro conservation". And finally, AZGFD cannot put a "season" on burros, nor can AZSFWC for that matter.

For the record, burro management falls under the auspices of the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971. You can read all about it here.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wild_and_Free-Roaming_Horses_and_Burros_Act_of_1971

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is the primary Federal agency responsible for burros. <https://www.blm.gov/programs/wild-horse-and-burro/about-the-program/program-data>

Here's a recap of the BLM's Black Mountain Herd Management Area (HMA) gathered from last month. <https://www.blm.gov/programs/wild-horse-and-burro/herd-management/gathers-and-removals/arizona/2024-black-mountain-hma>

If you've noticed the burro signs on I-17 driving north, the burros from the Lake Pleasant HMA have breached their boundaries. They are now staging in Anthem and have been photographed heading north along the New River wash east of I-17, moving towards the Tonto National Forest.

<https://www.blm.gov/programs/wild-horse-and-burro/herd-management/herd-management-areas/arizona/lake-pleasant>

Horses along the Salt River – Some have speculated these animals descended from the Conquistadors and might be "wild mustangs". Alas, apparently that's not true, in fact they were deemed "unauthorized livestock" 50 years ago by the Forest Service.

https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprd3849735.pdf

Click [here](#) to read the Salt River Wild Horse Management Group's 2023 Annual Report.

Legislative News – Arizona's legislative sessions are always interesting especially when the party splits are so close, and the legislative majority differs from the Governor's party.

Some would say gridlock, other's might say challenging. Either way, since the Second Session of the 56th Legislature began on January 8th, there have been 1,769 Bills, Resolutions and Memorials introduced. For comparison's sake, the First Session in 2023 had 1675 introduced. Of the 1562 bills considered, 348 were sent to the Governor for signature and only 205 measures were enacted into law. Here are the details:

<https://www.azleg.gov/alispdfs/56leg/1R/House/SummaryComplete.pdf>

<https://www.azleg.gov/alispdfs/56leg/1R/Senate/SummaryComplete.pdf>

AZSFWC makes a conscious decision to follow bills, good or bad, that might have a chance to pass and get to the Governor for signature. Some organizations have been tracking bills that don't or won't ever get there. While everyone has their own perspective on some of these measures, and a particular bill might be problematic, if it doesn't have a chance to pass and be signed by the Governor, we aren't going to spend time and political capital on it.

License Plate – The original "Conserving Wildlife" license plate kicked off sales in 2002. The first 8 years of the plate generated a total of \$146,722 in revenue. In 2010, we redesigned the plate, and it generated \$68,142 in that year alone. Since then we've received \$2,048,169 and 2024 has started off with our best January ever at \$20,967 in revenue.

OHV Committee – AZSFWC continues to participate in the Arizona Senate's OHV Committee proceedings. Some of the issues being discussed include educating users, the need for more law enforcement, habitat damage, non-resident fees, new trails, revenue allocation, and registration rules.

Solar between the North Kaibab and Utah Border – The BLM has designated over 2 million+ acres in Arizona for potential solar variances. Many of these sites are in close proximity to infrastructure, along power line corridors, and don't have a substantial wildlife component to stop them. However, this proposed project is right in the middle of our Kaibab mule deer migration corridor.

<https://www.sciencebase.gov/catalog/item/620e4ac0d34e6c7e83baa36a>

Zoom in on the map and click on BLM Draft Solar PEIS Alternative 3 [https://blm-egis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?](https://blm-egis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=22df2b327e0c49c3a9afb67de5ca658d)

[id=22df2b327e0c49c3a9afb67de5ca658d](https://blm-egis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=22df2b327e0c49c3a9afb67de5ca658d)

We are gathering more information and will provide comment by the April 18th deadline.

Wolves – The Mexican wolf census was just completed, and we've learned there is a minimum of at least 257 wolves in Arizona and New Mexico. This increase is the eighth consecutive year of population growth since the USFWS began recovery efforts. Here's the press release.

<https://www.fws.gov/press-release/2024-03/mexican-wolf-population-grows-eighth-consecutive-year>

Colorado has 12 recorded Gray wolves on the ground. Two ventured over from Wyoming, and ten were transplants from Oregon. Here's a map on where they are:

<https://cpw.state.co.us/learn/Pages/Wolves-Activity-Map.aspx>

Obviously more to come on many fronts, and we'll keep you posted!

Yours in Conservation,

Jim Unmacht
Executive Director

AZ Game & Fish Commission Awards



Jim Unmacht, the Executive Director of Arizona Sportsman for Wildlife Conservation (AZSFWC), was awarded the Prestigious Chairman's Award at the 2024 Arizona Game and Fish Commission Awards Banquet on January 20th, 2024.

Jim's personal dedication and passion for conservation is well known throughout the state. On behalf of AZSFWC he has worked extensively with the Federal and State land management agencies, including the USDA Forest Service, and Bureau of Land Management on issues critical to Arizona sportsmen and sportswomen conservationists. That effort has included significant outreach to our State and Federal legislators on issues concerning wildlife, conservation, and outdoor recreation on behalf of all of Arizona's wildlife conservation groups.

Jim served as AZSFWC's President from 2010 to 2016 and has served in the role of their Executive Director since 2017.

Congratulations Jim!
Randy Dahl
Anglers United

L. Gary Stinson Grant Program

Grant Applications Due April 1st

DON'T MISS THE DEADLINE!



VOSQF Pollinator Project

Valley of the Sun Quail Forever received grant funding for this project to educate the public about the importance of pollinators to wildlife and to distribute seeds for planting. 2250 pollinator seed packets containing native Arizona seeds were given out through all Phoenix public libraries, all Glendale public libraries, and 5 public libraries in Yavapai county. In addition, bulk seed was planted by students at a community college in Maricopa county.

[Read More Here](#)

Outdoor Hall of Fame Nominations

AZSFWC Member Group Wildlife for Tomorrow is soliciting nominations for inductees into the 26th annual Arizona Outdoor Hall of Fame. The deadline for submissions is Monday, April 8, 2024.

In 1998, Wildlife for Tomorrow and the Arizona Game and Fish Department joined forces to establish the Arizona Outdoor Hall of Fame. This prestigious award honors individuals and organizations that have made remarkable and enduring contributions towards the conservation of Arizona's wildlife, the preservation of its natural resources, and the promotion of the state's outdoor heritage.

To submit a nomination, visit

https://secure.lglforms.com/form_clengine/s/u9vANBfes4bGNqz2UhwV-A.

For questions or more information, send an email to info@wildlifefortomorrow.org

Please support our Member Group Activities

HUNT
STATE 48
— FOR —
365
DAYS



ELK • PRONGHORN • TURKEY • BIGHORN SHEEP • MULE DEER • BISON • COUES WHITETAIL

The 2024 Arizona Big Game Super Raffle is now live!

Winners of Arizona Special Big Game Tags can hunt 365 days!
The hunting season for these tags is 8/15/2024 – 8/14/2025

EVERY TICKET IS \$10!

You do not have to be an Arizona resident,
just IN the state of Arizona when tickets are purchased.

ADDITIONAL RAFFLES FOR 2024

Swarovski Optics Package • Colorado Bull Elk Hunt • New Mexico Bull Elk Hunt
Texas Mule Deer Hunt • Texas Whitetail Deer Hunt • Texas Bull Elk Hunt
Texas Aoudad Hunt • Texas Axis Deer Hunt • Texas Hog Hunt for Four Hunters

PLUS: Monthly Cash Incentive Drawings

ALL OF THE FUNDS RAISED FROM SPECIAL BIG GAME TAG RAFFLES GOES DIRECTLY
TO THE ARIZONA GAME & FISH DEPARTMENT FOR WILDLIFE CONSERVATION.



Purchase online at conservationfirstusa.org

Must be 21 years of age and present in the state of AZ to purchase tickets.
Visit conservationfirstusa.org for complete rules.

SALT RIVER SATURDAYS

March 16, 2024

April 6, 2024

[INFO HERE](#)



Expanding and Improving
Arizona's Native and Wild
Trout Fisheries

Native and Wild Trout Conference



What: The Arizona Game and Fish Department and the Arizona Council of Trout Unlimited invites you to attend the 15th Annual Native and Wild Trout Conference.

When: Thursday April 11, 2024 from 8:30a.m. - 3:00p.m.

Where: Arizona Game and Fish Department Headquarters
5000 West Carefree Highway, Phoenix.

Cost: Free - with a hosted lunch.

Topics Include:

- *Apache Trout Delisting in Arizona*
- *Gila Trout Recovery in Arizona & New Mexico*
- *Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout Recovery in New Mexico*
- *Gila and Apache Trout Awards - Distinguished Service for Conservation*
- *Events and Legislation Affecting Conservation*
- *Arizona Department of Environmental Quality*
- *Lees Ferry Trout Fishery*
- *Arizona & New Mexico Trout Challenge Programs*

Over 115 individuals attended the April 2023 conference from more than 50 agencies and organizations.

Don't miss this highly informative networking event. Seating is limited.

Registration closes on April 4th

Details on registration and topics can be found at www.az-tu.org.

Southern AZ Chapter Quail Forever Spring Road Clean Up/Earth Day April 22

Our spring road cleanup is planned 9:00 AM. We clean one mile between Sonoita and Patagonia on Highway 82. This typically takes about 60 minutes. All safety gear and pick up sticks will be provided. Recommend long trousers, long sleeve shirt, sun hat and gloves. Meet at

the intersection of Hog Canyon Road and Highway 82. We continue this to promote a positive image in the community and keep Hog Canyon access open.

Contact Kurt Cuneo at kurtmcuneo@hotmail.com or 406.980.1413 if you can help.



2024 Fish Camp - Christopher Creek, AZ

Fish Camp is a high-end angling program offered by the **Arizona Council of Trout Unlimited** and the Grand Canyon Council, BSA, located at the R-C Scout Camp just north of Payson, AZ. In this hands-on, immersive program, participants will learn the strategies necessary to select the proper fly or lure, understand how and where to cast a fly rod, entomology, tie flies, guided lectures, and master the art of provoking fish to attack a fly or lure. Highly qualified volunteers with extensive knowledge of everything fly fishing will work with campers through every aspect of learning the art of fly fishing.

The **Fish Camp** experience is all-inclusive including lodging, meals, equipment, transportation, AZ fishing license, swag gear, and trips to numerous fishing locations on streams and lakes near Payson, AZ.

Camp is available to any youth 13-18 years old. The registration cost for each camper is \$510 (Now thru February 8, 2024) \$525 (between February 9 and May 1, 2024) and \$575 (after May 1st). Maximum of 14 campers per session.

2024 Fish Camp participants can choose between these sessions:

- June 2 – June 7
- June 9 – June 14
- June 16 – June 21

Fish Camp informational website: <https://www.campgeronimo.org/fish-camp/>.

For further camp information, contact Arthur Greenway- AZTU Fish Camp Director, 602.399.7777 or education@zanegreytu.org.

For camper registration, contact Katie Fisher- Program Business Administrator, Grand Canyon Council, BSA, 602.955.7747, ext. 239 or Katie.Fisher@scouting.org.

Sportsmen's Business Directory

Do you really know who you do business with? Do the businesses you patronize support the things you like to do?

Help us build the Sportsmen's Business Alliance online directory to help you find those businesses.

If you are a business owner, here is an opportunity for you to reach out to like-minded sportsmen & women and support organizations that promote causes important to them.

[Read more HERE.](#)

Corporate Partner



Members

Alter Valley Conservation Alliance	AZ Outdoor Sports, Inc
Anglers United	AZ Predator CallersAZ Quail Today
AZ Antelope Foundation	Conserve and Protect Arizona
AZ Big Game Super Raffle/Conservation First USA	Diablo Trust
AZ Bowhunters Association	Ducks Unlimited
AZ Chapter Backcountry Hunters & Anglers	Into the Wild Outdoors
AZ Chapter National Wild Turkey Federation	Mogollon Sporting Association
AZ Chapter Safari Club International	No Excuse Hunting & Outdoors
AZ Council Trout Unlimited	Outdoor Experience 4 All
AZ Deer Association	Southern AZ Chapter Quail Forever
AZ Desert Bighorn Sheep Society	Southwest Wildlife Foundation/YVRGC
AZ Elk Society	The Trust for Public Land
AZ Flycasters Club	Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
AZ Houndsmen Association	Valley of the Sun Chapter Quail Forever
AZ Mule Deer Organization	Wildlife for Tomorrow
AZ Outdoor Adventures	

Associate Members

Be Outdoors Arizona
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
Rio Salado Sportsman's Club

Affiliate Members

SPORTSMEN'S
BUSINESS ALLIANCE



THE
WESTERN HUNTER

Arizona Sportsmen for Wildlife Conservation is a 501-c-3 not-for-profit organization whose mission is to educate and inform sportsmen, wildlife conservation organizations throughout the state and the public at large on important issues related to wildlife and wildlife habitat and to provide, via grants or other sources, funding to conserve Arizona's wildlife populations through habitat enhancement initiatives.

DONATE

The AZSFWC is responsible for managing the conservation license plate program (L. Gary Stinson Grant Fund). The fund is derived from the sale of wildlife conservation license plates and member organizations as well as non-member organizations are eligible to apply for those funds.



Not Just Another Pretty Plate

By purchasing this plate you will be making a contribution to Arizona's wildlife and wildlife habitat. Seventeen dollars (\$17) of each twenty-five (\$25) special license fee will go to AZSFWC's L. Gary Stinson Grant Fund. AZSFWC will review and approve all grants from the special license plate program revenues. These grants will fund important outdoor recreational and educational opportunities and on-the-ground wildlife habitat restoration and enhancement projects. (More info [HERE](#)).

These plates can be purchased online and can also be personalized. To order an AZSFWC Conservation License Plate go to: <https://azmvdnow.gov/plates>

Scroll through the page, to the "See All" button. Plates will be listed alphabetically with our plate entitled "Arizona Sportsmen for Wildlife Conservation". Click on the plate and follow the prompts. Order your plate as a sequential shelf plate for \$25.00 per year or as a personalized plate for \$50.00 per year.

The plate is also available for all categories of trailers as well as with the International Symbol of Access for Disabilities.

The AZSFWC Conservation Plate gives all Arizonan's an opportunity to contribute to programs that benefit our wild creatures. **Step up and support "Wild Arizona".**



Arizona Sportsmen for Wildlife Conservation | P.O. Box 75731, New River, AZ 85087

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