



CASE STUDY

Arizona Game & Fish Department



ASSOCIATION of
FISH & WILDLIFE
AGENCIES

Private Lands Working Group

Agriculture Conservation Committee



STATE AGENCY PRIVATE LANDS PROGRAM CASE-STUDY

The **Arizona Game and Fish Department (AZGFD)** private lands program was initiated in 1990. Arizona's private lands program consists of seven local specialists across the state who maintain their face to face relationships with landowners, promoting AZGFD cooperative programs. Annually, the AZGFD **Landowner Relations and Habitat Enhancement Program** hosts an request for proposals for any and all mutually beneficial habitat enhancing projects on public and private lands. On private lands, access agreements with landowners are a requirement to ensure cooperative projects are accessible to hunting and recreation. Arizona also has a Access Program Coordinator who implements on the ground specific relationship building projects such as clean-ups and volunteer projects.

LANDOWNER RELATIONS PROGRAM

The primary program within AZGFD to target private landowners is under the Landowner Relations Program (LRP). This has several program facets that include the Landowner Relations Project Program, LRP Access Program, Landowner Respect Program, and the Adopt-a-Ranch Program (these last two promote ethical sportsman use in and around ranches via sweat equity and signage). These programs promote Sportsman Access and/or relationship building through cooperative habitat enhancement projects.

[Learn About the Landowner Relations & Habitat Enhancement Program.](#)

The Arizona Game and Fish Department's Heritage Fund Program utilizes lottery proceeds allocated to the AZGFD for wildlife conservation efforts as well as providing access to outdoor recreational opportunities.

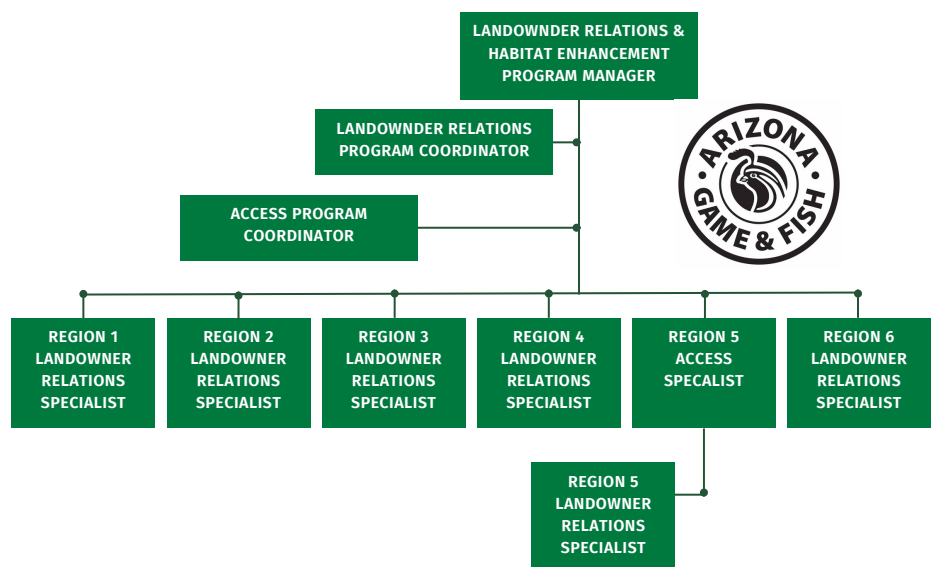


Figure 1. Landowner Relations and Habitat Enhancement Program Organizational Chart

STATE AGENCY PRIVATE LANDS PROGRAM CASE-STUDY: ARIZONA

VOLUNTARY PUBLIC ACCESS AND HABITAT INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

The Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Programs (VPA-HIP) is the primary federal program used to deliver private lands conservation in Arizona. VPA-HIP is under USDA's Farm Bill and is used to incentivize landowners to allow public access to their land for hunting, fishing, and other recreation.

PRIMARY PARTNERS

- Non-governmental organizations (NGO)
- Wildlife Control Operators (WCO)
- Lands Trusts
- Federal Partners



EMPLOYEE RECRUITMENT

- Internal employees
- College graduates who have interned with AZGFD
- State website
- Verbal
- National Job Boards (i.e. Texas A&M)



ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Primary marketing and engagement strategies Arizona uses to engage private landowners include:

- Local Meetings and Workshops (NRCS, Arizona Association of Conservation Districts, local Habitat Partnership)
- AZGFD Wildlife Manager contacts/relationships
- AZGFD Landowner Relations Specialist contacts/relationships
- Arizona Cattle Growers Magazine (Cattlelog)
- Arizona Game and Fish Department website.

PRIMARY FUNDING

AZGFD utilizes Game and Fish Dollars (State funding from license fees) and State Heritage Funds (excise tax from State lottery) to fund their Access and Habitat Program. AZGFD also utilizes Pittman-Robinson (P-R) funding for habitat enhancement projects.



ARIZONA PRIVATE LANDS CONSERVATION EFFORTS: WHAT WORKS?

- Diverse Department employee-landowner relationships (Terrestrial, Aquatic, Wildlife Managers and Biologists, Nongame, Contracts) that create continuous dialogs that promote our Landowner Relations Program.
- Competitive funding to pay for landowner- sportsman mutually beneficial habitat work and access.
- Support pillars of our landowner/rancher community.
- Cooperative positions with our NGO Partners.
- Work with diverse group of landowner, including lands controlled by non traditional partners like corporations and tribes.

ARIZONA PRIVATE LANDS CONSERVATION EFFORTS: CHALLENGES?

- Need for increased funding opportunities
- AZGFD Wildlife Manager and Landowner Relations Specialists position's longevity to build and maintain generational landowner relationships. Relationships take time and trust and frequent turnover impacts this negatively.
- Inflation, variation in annual funding allocations, changing demographics, OHV expansion, renewable energy development, urban sprawl.
- New landowner partner expectations vs reality. Our program is process driven.
- Private land habitat improvements are limited due to the majority of contiguous lands being controlled by the USFS, BLM, and Arizona State Land Department.

Special Note

Engagement with as many NGO's and partners as possible to amplify our messaging to landowners and cooperators. Also, delegate/assign habitat work with appropriate scale for the target NGO (match skillsets).

Supporting Videos

- Restoring Wildlife Habitat in Arizona for Elk, Mule Deer and Pronghorn
- GIANT Restoration Project in Arizona
- O'Haco Ranch – onX Public Access Project

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