



August 31, 2018

**Conserve and Protect Arizona
P.O. Box 71876
Phoenix, Arizona
85050**

Mission

Conserve and Protect Arizona works to educate, inspire and engage the people of Arizona, and our nation, to protect our conservation heritage. It embraces the North American Model for Wildlife Conservation and seeks to protect wildlife and its habitat, through science based management. We recognize our state and nation's long held traditions in the Great Outdoors and will strive to conserve, and hold in trust all wildlife for future generations.

August 31, 2018

**Tony Guiles, Chair
Arizona Game and Fish Department Advisory Committee
5000 W Carefree Hwy
Phoenix, AZ, 85086**

Dear Mr. Chairman

RE: Conserve and Protect Arizona (CAPAZ) Proposed Arizona Game and Fish Department (AZGFD) Outreach, Education, and Public Awareness Program with Options for Funding

Background

This proposal is the culmination of months of public meetings, testimony to the Arizona Game and Fish Commission (AZGFC), dialogue with the AZGFD, and additional research on the part of CAPAZ, supporting the need for an AZGFD public education program.

Careful consideration was given to the recent actions of the AZGFC and AZGFD, to streamline, simplify, and make it less costly for Arizona's sportsmen and women to hunt and fish in Arizona. For many reasons we recognize it is extremely important for the agency to be consistent with these actions; in particular because of expectations from Arizona's political policy makers and promises to Arizona sportsmen and women.

We also strongly support the decision of the AZGFC to only use license and tag fees for AZGFD operating expenses and not for other purposes.

We view this proposal as a continued work in progress; and more importantly a commitment to insure action is taken to establish a comprehensive education program for the AZGFD. Only with such a program in place can we expect the AZGFD to continue to be Arizona's wildlife management authority and management agency for all of Arizona's wildlife.

Important Tenants of the CAPAZ Education Funding Program

Those who are willing to participate, not mandated by the AZGFD, should fund the Education Program.

Legislation needs to be developed and put in statute to insure the program is permanent and focused on the intended goals of the program. This would be similar to the legislation developed for the Special Commissioners Auction permits.

An ***Education Partnership Committee*** must be established, similar to the Habitat Partnership Committee, to administer the program. Administration should include recommending all funding expenditures, setting goals and monitoring the success in attaining those goals. Commission, Department and User Representation is essential for complete program transparency.

The Education Partnership Program should not impact the current Habitat Partnership Program. Efforts to insure this will not happen should be utilized to mitigate any issues that may arise.

Partner with the Arizona Big Game Super Raffle (AZBGSR) to increase AZBGSR funds and establish a new funding source for the Education Program. Where possible, the Education Program should coordinate with the Arizona Big Game Super Raffle, to maximize benefit and revenues of both fundraising efforts.

Tags

The program should be built on the concept of ***multiple options for the users*** in how they engage supporting the conservation education effort. These options should be in the form of a tag lottery, ***not by creating additional auction permits.***

Application and tag fees should be set at a level lower than the current application and tag fees set for the regular AZGFD tag lottery. We would recommend a fee of at least five dollars but not to exceed ten dollars for each individual application. As the program develops, we are confident appropriate fees can be established to administer its needs.

Buyer must have a valid AZGFD hunting license to purchase education tag lottery chances.

Education Program tags should not count against the annual bag limit.

Education Program tags should not count against the once in a lifetime restriction.

Tag transfer could occur when any of the approved Department criteria is met.

Weapon specific seasons should be utilized for this program.

Limits on the number of chances that may be purchased by an individual buyer should be used to protect integrity of the program.

None of the *new* Education Program tags created under this program should be like the Special Commissioners tags, which are 365 days in length. Instead, they would be for regular established seasons like those in the hunt regulations or slightly extended seasons for promotion.

If Education Program tags are extended for promotion and sale, they should have days added at the end of the regular season rather than adding days before the season.

Sources for Tags

Taking permits from existing AZGFD recommended permits should not support the program. Instead, additional permits should be added to support the program; and these permits should not have a biological consequence to the resource. Permits created by this method should not exceed one hundred tags in total. One hundred tags is far less than 1% of the total number of tags the AZGFD and Commission currently authorizes in its three annual drawings

Additional sources of education tags can be found in tags returned to the AZGFD from the Point Guard Protection program.

Another source of tags would be from those returned to qualified non-profit organizations. The number of tags returned in this program continues to grow, and the tags should be utilized if at all possible.

Tag Funding Options

Create a Special Super Tag

These would be few in number, not more than ten in total. One tag should be created for each big game animal, except mountain lion.

These Super Tags would be made available to all of those applying online for the three annual regular AZGFD tag lotteries. At checkout, the applicant would be asked if they would like to purchase a chance for one or more of these special hunts.

This option, or similar options, have been used in other states and is very successful!

Create Tags and Tag Packages based on what hunters want

After creation of the Super Tags, we believe it is necessary to broaden our creative process to think out of the box. This would entail considering all options and giving them a fair hearing.

People hunt for many reasons and some will hunt anywhere they can whenever the opportunity presents itself. We have others who wish to hunt only in Arizona. It even gets more specific, because some only want to hunt close to home with family and friends. Other hunters only want to hunt certain animals.

With all of that said, this is where we should think about Regional tags, so people could hunt in their backyard. We should think about grouping tags of the same species together for the family and friends hunt. Why not consider grouping tags together of different species for individuals to hunt close to home. Some hunters want to hunt specific units; this also should be something to look at.

As more people look at the proposals being sent to the committee, hopefully even more creative suggestions will be detailed. This should be a collaborative process, which invites suggestions from those who choose to be involved.

Partner with In-State Sportsmen’s Organizations to promote additional raffles.

Currently the Special Commissioners tags are given to applicants who qualify, for them to promote and auction or raffle. The funds raised go into the HPC program.

We believe it would be possible to do the same with education lottery tags. Sportsmen’s Conservation Organizations (SCO) would be willing to apply for, promote, sell opportunities and draw winners at their annual fundraisers. These could be individual tags or tag packages.

We believe this will also increase the number of organizations involved in conservation education fundraising and reduce competition for the current Special Commissioners tags.

Special Event for Auction and Raffle Tags

We would like to suggest that an event be planned and developed to showcase Arizona’s Conservation Education and Habitat Partnership programs.

This would be held annually, perhaps in conjunction with some other AZGFD event.

Existing Special Commissioners Auction permits could be sold; Education Lottery Tags could be drawn, and it would provide an opportunity for individual SCO’s to come together and partner in support of Wildlife Conservation Funding.

We see this event as an opportunity to showcase what we do as individuals; but more importantly, collectively it shows how the Commission, Department, and Sportsmen and Women, work together for the benefit of Arizona’s wildlife.

In Conclusion

Conserve and Protect Arizona cannot overstate the need for this AZGFD Education program. It is essential that the citizens of Arizona understand why we have wildlife and who takes care of it.

The Arizona Game and Fish Department must be recognized as the states wildlife management agency with authority over all eight hundred plus species.

Arizonans also need to understand the critical role hunters and anglers play in supporting the Department's mission. Without their continued support with funding, advocacy and volunteers for projects the Department's ability to fulfill its mission will be diminished.

Without our telling this story we risk losing too much; and Arizona's Wildlife cannot afford to have that happen.

Yours in promoting Conservation Education,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Pete Cimellaro". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Pete Cimellaro, President
Conserve and Protect Arizona

PS: Once again thinking out of the box, CAPAZ is working to develop a program to raise additional education funding from anglers. As you might guess, it would be another Opt-in program, not a mandated one. Right now, the first step is establishing the AZGFD Education program, and CAPAZ is all-in. Let's make it happen!

CC. Ty Gray, Director
Arizona Game and Fish Department