

The Arizona Wildlife Federation (AWF) asks your assistance in defending Arizona's unique and irreplaceable wildlife and habitat. As Arizona's oldest conservation organization, the AWF represents outdoors enthusiasts of every kind in all across our state, all of whom share the common goal of restoring and conserving Arizona's rich wildlife heritage.

Certainly you do not want to be responsible for the negative impacts that will result from lack of funds to properly manage and sustain wildlife and habitat in these critical times.

Recently the Arizona Wildlife Federation (AWF) joined a number of other Arizona wildlife and conservation organizations in signing a petition requesting the Arizona Game & Fish Commission oppose a legislative budget sweep of Arizona Game & Fish Department funding by Arizona's legislature. It was an unprecedented action on the part of the AWF brought on by the disbelief and disappointment of learning that literally millions of dollars will be raided from Arizona Game and Fish Dept. programs that are vitally necessary to policies and management that directly affect wildlife and habitat. The disbelief comes from the knowledge that much of this funding has come straight out of the pockets of the sportsmen/women of Arizona, is not part of the general fund, and that means these conservation minded people have become the victims of double taxation, due to the taxes they pay into the general fund to other programs and departments that are losing money to the budget sweeps as well.

It seems impossible that our legislators have not gotten the message their constituents have sent them with regard to the Arizona Game and Fish Department being fully and independently funded. There has also been strong disapproval for the raiding of Game & Fish funding every one of the many times the legislature has committed this negative action against wildlife and habitat in Arizona, yet this action continues to be used with what can only be considered complete disregard of the wishes of the voters of this great state. Why our legislature feels that they have a right to take money, which is not part of the state's general fund, that outdoor recreationists have paid, and which is supposed to go directly to the Arizona Game & Fish Dept., which takes no money from the general fund, is a mystery and completely wrong.

The Arizona state legislature could not pick a more dangerous time to ignore the long-term affects of this type of action against wildlife and habitat. Arizona's wildlife and habitat has been under increasing stress factors over the last several years and will be into the foreseeable future due to our rapid, uncontrolled growth and development in every area of the state, climate change factors and the uncountable number of associated negative impacts from all of those things. In the context of our future, Arizona's wildlife and habitat are the most important things to guarantee for the future, as they are the very reason people want to come here and stay here. Major economic benefits derived from the public's interest in wildlife and habitat is proven and undeniable in Arizona.

The Arizona Wildlife Federation remains unalterably opposed to all proposals to rob Arizona's wildlife and habitat of its just, legal, and user supported funding through the Arizona Game and Fish Department. The funding for these programs is not, and never has been a part of the general funding process and therefore should remain separate from any budget shortfalls that should occur in the general funding process. The future of the wildlife of Arizona should not be at the whim of the "numbers game" and budgetary woes.

Sincerely,

Ryna Rock, President

Arizona Wildife Federation