

Arizona Wildlife Federation Position Paper State Trust Lands

The Arizona Wildlife Federation (AWF) believes that State Trust Land reform is badly needed in Arizona. AWF believes the following issues must be addressed in any attempt to reform State Trust Lands:

- State Trust Land reform must include all State Trust Lands, and not ignore 8.5 million plus acres of rural lands.
- We need to conserve sensitive urban interface State Trust Land around metro areas as an alternative to development.
- Wildlife needs to be recognized as a critical component of all State Trust Lands and an integral part of any decisions concerning those lands.
- Any State Trust Land Board or Commission should not be weighted with a majority of one special interest group or stakeholder group.
- State Trust Land use and planning should recognize landscape assessments and wildlife migration corridors as critical components and a priority in determining appropriate disposition and management of the State Trust Lands.
- Public recreational use and access to State Trust Lands need to be priority consideration in management and disposition of State Trust Lands, especially hunting, fishing and wildlife viewing.
- Use of the terms "conservation" and "preservation" throughout any reform language must not be left up to interpretation. Some lands and wildlife can be effectively "conserved", whereas others may need to be "preserved".
- All "stakeholders" need to be consulted in any reform process...including ranchers, sportsmen, conservationists, preservationists, developers, environmentalists, government agencies, and educators.
- The ability to make viable, equitable and fair land exchanges needs to be included in the reform process with strict controls in place to prevent corruption, for the purpose of consolidating critical checkerboard lands.
- State Trust Land lessees need to be held accountable for good land and wildlife stewardship, with enforcement and sanctions against violators of that stewardship.
- The State Land Department needs to be adequately funded and staffed to achieve all of these objectives.
- State Trust Land leases for livestock grazing must require a comprehensive Livestock Grazing Plan, developed with the lessee and public input, which considers wildlife habitat needs and includes stocking rates, seasons of use, forage utilization standards, pasture movement schedules, and standards for managing livestock during drought conditions.