



News Release

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AGENCIES INVITE PUBLIC TO DISCUSS SONORAN PRONGHORN EMERGENCY RECOVERY PROJECT

The Southwest's swiftest mammal is faltering – but help is on the way. A planned semi-captive breeding enclosure for the endangered Sonoran pronghorn could provide the boost that saves the dwindling U.S. population from eradication.

The one square mile enclosure in a non-wilderness portion of southern Arizona's Childs Valley on the Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge is being designed to protect a male and between four and nine female pronghorns from predators, in an irrigated and well vegetated area to start producing up to two fawns per female the first year. Those fawns will help to replenish the U.S. population that has plummeted from nearly 250 animals to less than 25 in the last decade.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Arizona Game and Fish Department, together with the Bureau of Land Management and Department of Defense, will construct the enclosure and select the breeding population. The wildlife agencies will host a meeting to discuss the project and answer questions from 5-9 p.m. on Aug. 8 at the Ajo Community Center at Bud Walker Park, 290 5th Street, Ajo, Ariz.

Along with range fragmentation and habitat degradation, the present, prolonged drought has taken its toll on the Sonoran pronghorn. The drought has greatly reduced the available forage, diminishing the nutrients a mother can pass to her fetus and suckling fawn. Malnourished fawns are likely to die.

A number of habitat-based emergency projects are being performed to rescue the U.S. population of the Sonoran pronghorn from its perilous state. The multi-disciplinary Sonoran Pronghorn Recovery Team considers the protected production of fawns to augment the U.S. population to be crucial to the population's survival at this time. A similar experiment on the Mexican Peninsular pronghorn subpopulation produced over 200 animals in southern Baja.

The Sonoran pronghorn has been considered endangered since 1967. The range and population of the desert-adapted pronghorn subspecies have been threatened by early 20th century overhunting, livestock overgrazing, disease introduced through cattle, and ever-increasing habitat fragmentation. There are presently three isolated populations: two in Mexico and one in the U.S.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving,

protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 94-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System which encompasses more than 535 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 70 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 78 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

<<http://arizonaes.fws.gov>>

Note to Editors: Color photographs (image library) of the Sonoran pronghorn are available on the Service's website at <http://arizonaes.fws.gov/> or the Department's website at http://www.gf.state.az.us/newsroom/photo_downloads.html or by contacting the individuals listed above.