



February 9, 2010

The Honorable Jan Brewer
Governor of Arizona
1700 W. Washington
Phoenix, AZ 85007

Dear Governor Brewer:

Please accept this counsel from Sky Island Alliance, Tucson Audubon, Sierra Club - Grand Canyon Chapter, Defenders of Wildlife, Western Watersheds Project, Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection, Bat Conservation International, Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, Friends of Ironwood Forest, Arizona Native Plant Society, Center for Biological Diversity, Tucson Orienteering Club, Arizona Heritage Alliance, Friends of Saguaro National Park, Huachuca Audubon Society, Arizona Wilderness Coalition, Rincon Institute, P.L.A.N. (Protect Land and Neighborhoods), Tucson Mountains Association, Arizona Zoological Society, Cienega Watershed Partnership, Arizona Preservation Foundation, and Grand Canyon Wildlands Council. Together, we represent more than 100,000 Arizonans who share our concerns about wildlife and habitat conservation in Arizona.

We strongly object to the provisions in your proposed budget that would “sweep” funds from the **Heritage Fund** and the **Wildlife Conservation Fund** to benefit the General Fund. These funds are

currently used by the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AZGFD) for purposes of managing wildlife and habitat in our state—and, in the case of the State Parks portion of Heritage Fund, to protect parks and natural areas. We strongly object to proposals to revisit the intentions of these voter-approved funds to undo the previously-expressed will of Arizona voters.

We offer the following points and counsel:

- Arizona is fortunate to provide habitat for more than 800 different species (the highest diversity of any inland state); of which 13 are listed as threatened, 25 are listed as endangered, 13 are candidates for listing, and 302 have been identified as State Species of Greatest Conservation Need.
- Heritage Fund and Wildlife Conservation Fund monies are critically important to the continued efforts of AZGFD on scientific data collection and analysis—a necessary ingredient for effective habitat and species conservation actions, wise land-use planning, and sound economic development decision-making. A multitude of species benefit from these activities including nongame, game, and threatened and endangered species.
- Heritage Fund and Wildlife Conservation Fund monies are the primary funding mechanism for conservation of Arizona's most important wildlife—including but not limited to popular charismatic species such as bald eagle, California condor, black-footed ferret, and Apache trout. Species in need of active recovery cannot wait and should not be sacrificed to Arizona's elected officials' inability to properly manage the state's budget.
- Heritage Fund and Wildlife Conservation Fund monies are, by design and by the expressed will of Arizona voters, to be dedicated to the purposes for which they were established. Voters first expressed that support for the Heritage Fund by a two-to-one margin in 1990. They again supported these programs by approving the lottery in 1998 and 2002 by large margins. Wildlife Conservation Fund dollars were approved as part of the Indian Gaming Preservation and Self-Reliance Act in 2002. Those funds are protected by the Voter Protection Act provisions of the Arizona Constitution and are to be used for specific wildlife purposes rather than swept into the general fund. If necessary, we believe the voters will remind our elected officials of this again in 2010.
- Heritage Fund and Wildlife Conservation Fund monies are multiplied by federal funds and other funds from matching grants. Elimination of Heritage Fund and Wildlife Conservation Fund monies from their intended purposes would also eliminate important revenue from these matching grants—Arizona would be leaving money on the table.
- If the Heritage Fund is eliminated, it would end the AZGFD grant program which has awarded more than 640 grants totaling more than \$12 million for wildlife, outdoor recreation, and environmental education projects statewide—these grants, too, are often matched with other funds and contributions, leveraging and multiplying the state's investment.
- Since its passage, there has been no increase in the actual dollars to the Heritage Fund; that means that the current allocation adjusted for inflation funds a lot less than before. It is essential to Arizona and Arizonans who created the Heritage Fund to protect those dollars.
- The AZGFD receives no General Fund dollars.

While we believe AZGFD should have a more diversified funding mechanism more closely aligned with the wishes of all concerned Arizonans and with the needs of 21st-century wildlife and habitat preservation, we most certainly believe that sweeping targeted funds such as Heritage and Wildlife Conservation into the state's general fund is a big step in the wrong direction. Arizona's current economic crisis is, indeed, cause for serious concern and requires decisive and difficult actions. We counsel that measures to relieve the current crisis should not—must not—squander our natural heritage. We, together, have a duty to sustain and protect Arizona's diverse fish and wildlife and the wildlands on which they depend, now and into the future for all of the citizens in Arizona.

Sincerely,

Melanie Emerson, Executive Director
Sky Island Alliance

Peg Davis, President
Tucson Orienteering Club

Paul Green, Executive Director
Tucson Audubon

Janice Miano, Administrative Director
Arizona Heritage Alliance

Sandy Bahr, Chapter Director
Sierra Club - Grand Canyon Chapter

Robert Newton, Executive Director
Friends of Saguaro National Park

Eva Sargent, Southwest Director
Defenders of Wildlife

Michael W Guest, President
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Greta Anderson, Arizona Director
Western Watersheds Project

Kevin Gaither-Banchoff, Executive Director
Arizona Wilderness Coalition

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Friends of Ironwood Forest

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Arizona Zoological Society

Nancy Zierenberg, Co-Chair
Conservation Committee
Arizona Native Plant Society

Martie Maierhauser, Chairman
Cienega Watershed Partnership

Kieran Suckling, Executive Director
Center for Biological Diversity

Jim McPherson, Board of Directors
Arizona Preservation Foundation

Kelly Burke, Executive Director
Grand Canyon Wildlands Council

CC: Arizona State Legislature