

2008 Showcase in Excellence Award Recipient

Arizona Game and Fish Department “Hunt Recommendation Process”



A hunter glasses for Antelope in House Rock Wildlife Area

Company Information:

Highest Ranking Official:
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Type of work:

The Arizona Game and Fish Department operates within the Executive Branch of Arizona State government. State law mandates that the Department protect Arizona's wildlife resources, regulate watercraft use and enforce off-highway vehicle (OHV) laws. We do this by implementing policies for conservation, management and harvest of wildlife and by enforcing laws that protect wildlife and public health and safety.

Workforce: 625

Testimonial of Value of Arizona State Quality Awards Program

The Arizona Game and Fish Department avails itself of the Showcase In Excellence Award to continually evaluate and improve our organization one process at a time. As a past recipient of the Pioneer Award for Quality, the AZ Game and Fish Department has been working to address the opportunities for improvement (OFIs) identified in the feedback report we received through that award program. Answering the criteria questions in the course of applying for the Showcase Award helps us to see the strengths and shortcomings of our processes. The outcome of the award application validates our own findings, and the feedback report received at the end of the process, helps to guide our future improvements.

It is our hope that by continuing to use the Showcase In Excellence Award program to evaluate and improve some of our key processes, we will position ourselves to one day be named a recipient of the Governor's Award for Quality, and ultimately, the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award.

– Larry D. Voyles

Director, Arizona Game and Fish Department

Highlights of Organizational Process:

Each year, the Arizona Game and Fish Department makes hunt recommendations for game species in Arizona. These recommendations are important because, when the Arizona Game and Fish Commission acts on them, they become the hunting seasons that govern legal wildlife for harvest and seasons used by 218,000 resident and nonresident hunters and spend 1.3 million days afield.

A recent economic survey indicates that Arizona hunters spend about \$541 million annually, supporting 6,700 jobs.

There is substantial demand for hunting opportunity in Arizona. In 2007, there were almost 2 applicants for every deer and turkey tag offered, 4 applicants for every elk tag offered, 7 applicants for every

pronghorn tag offered, 44 applicants for every buffalo tag offered, and 110 applicants for every bighorn sheep tag offered.

Arizona Game and Fish has created a closed-loop process for gathering inputs from both the scientific community and key stakeholder groups to make hunt recommendations that foster hunting, protect animal populations, and provide a revenue source for improving wildlife habitat in the state of Arizona. A number of in-process checks are conducted, including multiple supervisor reviews and checking recommendations against the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation to ensure that recommendations are consistent with known conditions and are completed on schedule.

In 1985 the process was improved to address a need to bolster hunting as an activity in Arizona. At the time, the number of permitted elk hunters was only about 7,000, limiting revenues from the sale of licenses and tags, and impacting the Department's ability to continue its work to improve wildlife habitat.

The Arizona Game and Fish Department improves the process in response to lessons learned from the results of previous years. It uses multiple indicators of process improvements including: the introduction of an electronic system in 2001 to prevent data entry errors, the change to a two-year guideline cycle beginning in 2005, and the use of GPS technology for the animal survey process to provide more structure and improved accuracy needed to improve recommendations.

The Department uses a number of methods to obtain feedback from key stakeholders, including holding a series of public meetings throughout the state to solicit public input and a survey designed to assess hunter success. Stakeholder feedback, including comments from hunting and animal protection groups, is documented and circulated throughout the Department. Comments are published on the Department's website and circulated to all Department heads. Responses to stakeholder feedback can be traced directly to actions and improvements such as changing the dates for hunting a particular population of wildlife to provide a longer breeding season.

The availability of hunting permits has been increasing. For example, total elk permits increased from 6% from 2006 to 2009, while total bull elk permits increased by 32% over the same time frame. Elk permits in 2009 reached a total of 26,474. An increase in available permits results in increased opportunity for hunters, which translates to increased revenue for the Department.

New hunt guidelines, established in 2005, resulted in an increase in hunters afield for elk and deer, while showing little change in the harvest since 2001. This meets the Department's goal of increasing hunter participation while having no negative impact on animal populations. Results over time indicate the success of the process. Hunter numbers have increased, although harvest rate remained, relatively, stable; a relatively small increase in harvest occurred despite the 150% increase in hunters. This approached allowed elk populations to grow while more hunters could also go afield.

After the new hunt guidelines were established in 2005, license and tag sales increased 12% for deer and 7.8% for elk, indicating that the Arizona Game and Fish Department is realizing its mission "...to provide wildlife resources...for the enjoyment, appreciation, and use by present and future generations."