

## 2007 Showcase in Excellence Awards Recipient

### Arizona Game and Fish Department – “Endangered Species Recovery”

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*AGFD employees greet kenneled black-footed ferrets at the airport, en route to releasing them to the wild in Arizona*

#### **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**

“Receiving the 2005 Pioneer Award for Quality was a tremendous accomplishment for the Arizona Game and Fish Department. However, we are not the type of organization that rests on its laurels and we didn’t want anyone to feel that the Pioneer Award was the end of our journey. So, we decided to put some of our individual processes to the test by going through the Showcase In Excellence Awards application process. Our Endangered Species Recovery Process has been highly successful, has produced excellent results, and has been adopted for implementation across the United States and internationally. However, we subjected this process to the scrutiny of the Showcase In Excellence Awards criteria for two reasons – first and foremost to receive feedback to make it even more successful, and secondly in the hopes of receiving the kind of credible external validation that comes from this award. The Showcase In Excellence Award demonstrates to our customers, partners and stakeholders, to our peers, our advocates and critics, and most importantly to our employees, that the foundational principles of total quality are embedded throughout the Arizona Game and Fish Department.”

– Duane L. Shroufe  
Director, Arizona Game and Fish Department

#### **Highlights of Organizational Process:**

The Endangered Species Recovery (ESR) Process was established to meet the need for a formal process to identify, approve, and implement endangered species reintroduction and management projects. State wildlife agencies and the public had become frustrated with the federal regulatory framework previously established to govern natural resource management. The process that existed did not allow for sufficient stakeholder discussion, decision, and implementation at the appropriate levels. This led to conflicts and collaborative recovery efforts were effectively confounded. While working with collaborators through the 1980s and 1990s to make changes in the Arizona bald eagle recovery effort the Department identified

the need for two substantial process improvements: an agreement with the US Fish and Wildlife Service regarding cooperative implementation of the Endangered Species Act in Arizona, and guidelines for adaptive management of collaborative conservation efforts through which species recovery is pursued. Dialogue with other states and Mexico indicated that they perceived the same needs. The Department decided to work with regional and international wildlife agency organizations to address these issues. As a result of the Department's initiative, in 1999 the Association for Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) asked the Arizona Game and Fish Department to chair two national work groups to explore the issues and develop solutions.

Two models were built through the Department's innovation and leadership and both were adopted by AFWA in 2001. These have been fully incorporated into and now guide the Department's endangered species recovery efforts. However, the Arizona Game and Fish Department continues to apply adaptive management principles to improve the process as necessary for specific projects.

The twelve-step Endangered Species Recovery Process has yielded positive outcomes for Arizona endangered species recovery efforts.

Process highlights include:

- The Endangered Species Recovery process is fully integrated with the Arizona Game and Fish Department's mission to *"conserve, enhance, and restore Arizona's diverse wildlife resources and habitats through aggressive protection and management programs, and to provide wildlife resources and safe watercraft and off-highway vehicle recreation for the enjoyment, appreciation, and use by present and future generations."*
- The process effectively uses a variety of communication and collaboration methods to achieve a full spectrum of stakeholder involvement and feedback.
- The Arizona Game and Fish Department continually incorporates efficiency, effectiveness, and process improvements at the project, process, and organizational levels.
- The Endangered Species Recovery Process uses methods, metrics, and measures to effectively gauge the progress of projects and communicate issues and results to project stakeholders.
- The Department has made significant progress toward condor recovery. The California condor mortality rate in Arizona has declined from 38% for the five-year period from 1997-2001 to 26% for the five-year period 2002-2006.
- Application of the Endangered Species Recovery Process to the Condor Reintroduction project has resulted in an increase in the use of non-lead ammunition from 3% in 2004 to 60% in 2006.
- The number of wild-born black-footed ferret litters in Arizona increased from only 1 in 2004 to 4 in 2005. In 2006, 10 wild-born ferret litters were recorded.
- Ferret reintroduction has succeeded beyond expectations. The project has proven to be a valuable component of the national recovery program, and cooperators, stakeholders, and the public at large have applauded its success.
- As a result of the Endangered Species Recovery Process, the Department's Sonoran pronghorn captive breeding efforts have yielded an increase in the number of fawns recruited into breeding pens from 0 in 2004 to 18 in 2007.
- The number of pronghorn released from the captive breeding pen has increased. The released animals appear to be doing well in the wild.
- Through the Endangered Species Recovery Process, the Arizona Game and Fish Department has helped de-listed two endangered species: bald eagle and peregrine falcon.
- The Arizona Game and Fish Department is recognized as an industry leader and the Endangered Species Recovery Process is recognized as an industry best practice deployed nationally and internationally.