



# Region IV Updates

Greetings from Yuma

Megan McWard,  
AZ Farm Bill Biologist



# Yuma – The *Best* Dove Hunting Destination

- While Patagonia may offer great quail hunting, Yuma is the place to be on September 1<sup>st</sup>
- 2018 was an amazingly successful season with an estimated 1400 hunters in just the Yuma area alone
  - Nearly all hotels were full to accommodate visitors, with an estimated 50% increase in profit for the local hospitality industry
  - Huge boost to the local economy with many businesses hosting their own events and volunteer clean-up days
  - Very few conflicts between sportsman and locals promoting a positive experience for all



# What to Expect - 2019 Dove Season

- Dove Plot Program – 68 Acres between Yuma and Wellton area
  - Ware Farms
  - Weddle Farms
  - Desert Premium
  - Carter Farms – Youth Hunt Only
- Two Youth Hunt Opportunities
  - Yuma Rod and Gun Club
  - Carter Farms
- 2019 World Championship Dove Cookoff
  - Will be part of Yuma's Celebrate the Heat block party on Main Street
    - *September 7<sup>th</sup> from 6:00pm to 11:00pm*
    - *Live music and entertainment, delicious food, and fun activities for the kids!*



# Food Safety

- Food safety has become a top priority in the local agricultural community
- Many farm properties that have participated in the dove plot program in the past have dropped out due to food safety concerns
- Please respect changes in recreational access
- Be mindful of wells, canals, and sprinkler systems
- Leave an area better than how you found it



# Habitat Improvement

- South Garcia Solar Well Conversion
  - Five generator wells will be converted to solar on the Garcia BLM allotment near Wickenburg
  - Cost-share between NRCS-EQIP and AGFD
  - Part of a long term project to restore habitat
    - *Next step will be repairing fences to introduce cattle rotation to improve vegetation and forage quality*



# In the Works

- Water Rights Application Process
  - Providing technical assistance for the Barry Goldwater Air Force Range on two new water developments:
    - *Hat Mountain Tank*
    - *Ku:Wud Tank*
  - Water developments will primarily benefit desert mule deer and Sonoran pronghorn
- Resolving recreational problems on Pipeline Ranch north of Wickenburg
  - Date Creek Falls is an amazing hiking destination, but a 30-foot travel trailer will not make it down the wash to the parking area
  - Despite what Google Maps says, the Colorado River is still a three hour drive from the ranch
  - Positive outlook: Potential quail forage project on nearby private property





# Region V Updates

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Sarah Gandaria,  
AZ Farm Bill Biologist



# Access Program

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- Bog Hole FS Access- another meeting planned
- Flying V Access Agreement with Karol George (GMU 30B)
- Coronado Dairy enrolled in Access Compact Program
- FS 72 Rd is still closed, planned to be re-opened soon (March or May 2019)
  - Patagonia Regional Times did an article
- Continuing to renew other access agreements
- AGFD and ASLD locked gate protocol agreement still in the works





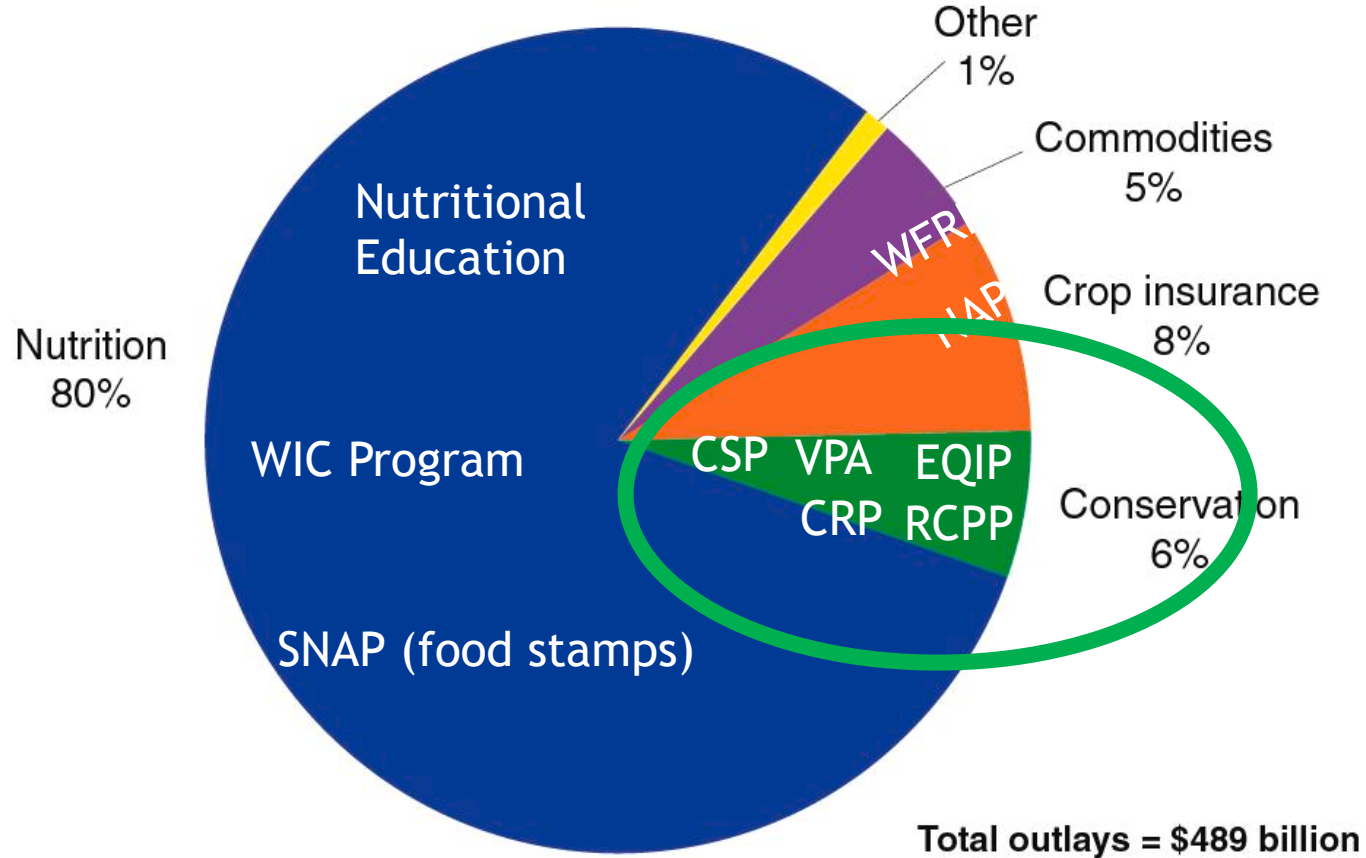
# Habitat Improvement

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- Assisting with **Water Availability** projects
  - Water Troughs and Solar Pump, West of Tucson (38M)
  - Dirt Tank Cleaning and Sealing (37B)
- Assisting with **Brush Removal** projects
  - Altar Valley (GMU 36C)
  - San Bernardino Valley (GMU 30A)
  - Bonita (Aranaipa Valley) (GMUs 31 & 32)
  - San Simon (GMU 28)
  - FS Border Mastication Project (35A & 30B)

# What is in the Farm Bill?

Projected outlays under the 2014 Farm Act, 2014-2018



Source: USDA Economic Research Service using data from Congressional Budget Office, Cost Estimates for the Agricultural Act of 2014, Jan 2014.



# Conservation in the Farm Bill

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- CSP - Conservation Stewardship Program
- VPA-HIP - Voluntary Public Access - Habitat Incentive Program
- CRP - Conservation Reserve Program
- EQIP - Environmental Quality Incentives Program
- RCPP - Regional Conservation Partnership Program
- WLW- Working Lands for Wildlife

# More with the RCPP:

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# Quail Forever in Arizona

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Al Eiden

West Region Director





# Old Farm Bill impacts in Arizona

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- **What did the old Farm Bill provide to Arizona:**
  - Arizona received \$2.2 million (out of a total \$40 million available to the country) from VPA-HIP program
  - This helped maintain access to or open over 4.5 million acres of private and landlocked USFS, BLM, and State Trust Lands
  - 5 RCPP projects were approved directing \$7 million in Farm Bill funding to AZ for wildlife specific project. This also brought an additional \$8 million in funding directed toward these 5 focus areas from many partners like AZ Game and Fish.
- When finished these 3 projects will have restored over 50,000 acres of grassland habitat and provided reliable water sources on 500,000 acres of range



# Old Farm Bill impacts in Arizona

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- **What did the old Farm Bill provide to Arizona:**
  - The Riparian Working Lands for Wildlife Initiative provided \$1.5 million for wildlife work. Without a position dedicated to this funding only \$600,000 actually made it on the ground (meaning \$900,000 is funding for wildlife was missed). This missed opportunity is why QF moved to get a riparian specialist position
  - All 3 QF positions in AZ are a the result of Farm Bill programs and funding sources (AZGFD has another 4 positions due to Farm Bill)
  - AZ EQIP annul allocation approximately \$6 million, all this funding improves natural resource conservation and will wildlife staff could all be put towards wildlife priority projects



# New Farm Bill impacts in Arizona

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- What can the new Farm Bill provide to Arizona:
  - There will be \$50 million available in the VPA-HIP program, up \$10 million from the last farm bill
  - 10% of all EQIP funding must be directed to wildlife projects, which is \$1 billion over the 5 year life of the bill.
  - AZ EQIP funding should increase to \$7 million a year again that mean \$700,000 a year that has to be for wildlife. This does not include RCPP, easements or any other program that QF or AGFD can direct to AZ for wildlife work.





# New Farm Bill impacts in Arizona

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- **What can the new Farm Bill provide to Arizona:**
  - EQIP funding can be used on USFS, BLM, State Trust land, and private land. The funding has to be directed through a lessee or landowner, but habitat projects can be done on federal lands.
  - RCPP went from \$300 million over 5 years to \$300 million annually. AZ got \$7 million in the previous bill, so there is 5 times the funding opportunity that can be brought to AZ in the future for wildlife/ quail habitat work
  - The Working Lands for Wildlife program must be implemented, which means another \$300,000 plus will be available for the Riparian specialist to develop and fund projects with each year for the next 5 years. With a position in place QF will not miss this opportunity moving forward.



# New Farm Bill impacts in Arizona

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- **What can the new Farm Bill provide to Arizona:**
  - There will be funding to continue the 3 QF staff and expand this staff as long as QF and other partners continue to fund these positions that secure the Farm Bill program funding
  - With all this funding available, it will be important for QF to maintain staff to take advantage of the programs.



# Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)

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- **What can the new LWCF provide to Arizona:**
  - Over \$900 million annually will be authorized through this legislation each year unless it is ever repealed.
  - \$10 million of this funding on an annual basis must be used for public road easements into land locked federal lands, which ties in directly to the issues in SE Arizona
  - The other funding goes into conservation easement that protect habitat and to many other program operated by US Park Service and AZ State Parks. There are many grants available for outreach efforts that get people outside and enjoying the natural world, which could be a good way to increase QF R3 efforts and opportunities
  - This is a bill along with the Farm Bill the PF/QF uses funding provided by chapters through LAF to promote and educate legislators about.



# Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA)

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- **What can RAWA provide to Arizona:**

- This is new legislation that would create new funding for wildlife conservation
- With the Farm Bill and LWCF legislation completed, RAWA and the PR modernization act will be our LAF priorities this upcoming legislative session
- If passed this bill would provide state wildlife agencies \$1.3 billion in new funding to manage all wildlife species focused on non-game species. The \$1.3 billion in funding is roughly the same amount PR generates for wildlife management currently. AZ would receive an estimated \$30 million (PR is about \$26-32 million each year in AZ)
- With this funding in place, AZGFD will have more flexibility in decisions on where to use PR, RAWA, and license fees to potentially increase funding to manage quail in AZ and every other wildlife species within AZ.
- RAWA will provide more funding for state agencies to complete habitat restoration across the state, which will include grasslands (scaled quail), oak savanna restoration (Mears), and desert habitats (Gambel's).
- This bill is this generation of sportmen and sportswomen chance to create a legacy that rivals the Pittman/Roberston act (1937) and the Dingle Johnson act (1955) that currently fund the majority of wildlife management in Arizona (and the United States)