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Verde NRCD Ranching Working Group Update

The Verde NRCD Ranching Working Group would like to thank everyone who participated in our recent Ranching Workshop. The turnout exceeded our expectations, and the discussions were both productive and insightful. Most importantly, the workshop gave the Verde NRCD Supervisors a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing ranchers throughout our district.

Since the workshop, we have continued conversations with producers and agency partners to identify priorities and determine where the Working Group can have the greatest impact. Your input is helping shape our direction as we work to support ranchers across the Verde Valley and on our federal grazing allotments.

One of our first priorities is to help ranchers better understand their role and responsibilities in the Verde Basin Adjudication. We are exploring the possibility of hosting a virtual question-and-answer session with the University of Arizona's Natural Resource Users Law and Policy Center, where producers will have the opportunity to ask questions and receive guidance from legal experts.

Another major issue identified by workshop participants is the lengthy process for obtaining archaeological clearances for ranch improvement projects. The Working Group will be pursuing answers on how these reviews can be completed more efficiently and exploring funding opportunities that can help producers move needed projects forward while protecting cultural resources.

At the end of the day, we work for our cooperators. Your ideas, concerns, and experiences help guide the work we do. If you're facing a challenge on your operation or have suggestions for projects, programs, or workshops you'd like to see, we'd love to hear from you. We welcome participation in our solutions focused Rancher Working Group. We are just getting started and need your knowledge!

Together, we can identify practical solutions, advocate for meaningful improvements, and help ensure that ranching remains a strong and sustainable part of the Verde Valley's future.

Becki Ross Verde NRCD

USFS Update

- Multiple allotments working on maintenance of water infrastructure and others are being evaluated for installation of water distribution systems.
- Approximately 5 earthen stock ponds have been cleaned in the past 3 months
- The forest is working with FS personnel to plan a presentation for ranchers that will focus on term grazing permit administration and national range directives
- The forest is currently working through planning fiscal year 2027 funding requests and projects
- Two grassland restoration projects that already have NEPA decisions are continuing to be implemented with funding from AZGFD
- The Nature Conservancy is in the process of contracting out heritage surveys to implement future gulley stabilization projects
- The forest is exploring an opportunity to enter into an agreement with AACD for heritage surveys and project implementation
- Current and upcoming contracts include fence reconstruction and cattle guard replacement
- Meadow conservation in Fry Park is moving forward with log worm fence barriers and road closures
- Vegetation data will be collected in the next 6 months to analyze grazing capacity on vacant allotments
- The forest is exploring setting up a virtual fence working group to determine how best to start using this new technology

VNRCD Rancher Workshop Series Summary

I want to start by thanking everyone who showed up and participated in the workshop series put on this winter! It was amazing to have the community come together and discuss these issues on the rangelands and how we can address them.

For those who did not attend, the Verde NRCD put on workshops facilitated by U of A Extension to discuss issues ranchers and agencies have on rangelands, brainstorm solutions to these issues, and then determine how to fund these solutions using help from partners such as The Nature Conservancy and Arizona Association of Conservation Districts. These meetings were very well

attended and have already been a fantastic opportunity for improvements to be made to rangeland management in the Verde Valley. In fact, certain Forest Service employees even began acting on certain issues in between meetings. We also had a fantastic outpour of support from our partners at State Lands, AACD, TNC, AZ Game and Fish, Public Lands Council, and many others, not just by attending all the meetings, but also doing presentations on how they can help with funding and supporting the solutions.

These meetings resulted in the creation of a Rancher Subcommittee under the Verde NRCD, as a means to continue the momentum of these initial meetings to ensure that the proposed solutions move forward rather than stall. This subcommittee is composed of local ranchers, agencies, and non-governmental organizations that are interested in continuing the work of the meetings and will meet twice a year, as well as publish a quarterly newsletter. This was decided as an initial effort to keep momentum going and allow communication with all stakeholders about the work being done.

We are very excited about this subcommittee getting movement, and we look forward to the work that it can accomplish to improve both ranching and rangelands in the Verde Valley.

Caleb Miller, Assistant in Extension, Yavapai County

Meet your local University of Arizona Rangeland and Livestock Extension Team!

 <i>Livestock / Beef Quality Assurance / Arizona Livestock Incident Response Team (ALIRT)</i> Katie H. Spanyers - Area Assistant Agent, Yavapai and Coconino (khaz@arizona.edu)	 <i>Public Lands Grazing Animal Movement Rangeland Monitoring ALIRT</i> Jacob Hennig - Assistant Extension Specialist, Statewide (jhennig@arizona.edu)	 <i>Plant-Herbivore Interactions / Targeted Grazing / Rangeland Monitoring / ALIRT</i> Flavie Audoin - Assistant Extension Specialist, Statewide (faudoin@arizona.edu)
 <i>Range / Rangeland Monitoring / Arizona Livestock Incident Response Team</i> Caleb Miller - Assistant in Extension, Yavapai County (calebnilesmiller@arizona.edu)	 <i>Rangeland Wildlife Human-Wildlife Conflict/ Recreation/ Rangeland Monitoring</i> Courtney Duchardt - Assistant Extension Specialist, Statewide (cduchardt@arizona.edu)	 <i>Rangeland Management Environmental Policy Rangeland Monitoring</i> Amy Ganguli - Extension Specialist & Marley Endowed Chair, Statewide (amyganguli@arizona.edu)
Prescott Extension Office 840 Rodeo Dr Bldg C Prescott, AZ 86305-2318	Verde Valley Extension Office 2830 N Commonwealth Dr Suite 103, Camp Verde, AZ 86322	University of Arizona Main Campus 1064 E Lowell St Tucson, AZ 85721

Assistant Agent **Katie Hazlewood Spanyers** and Assistant in Extension **Caleb Miller** facilitated the Verde NRCD local workgroup meetings this past winter and spring, but have you met the rest of the University of Arizona Extension team working on rangelands in the area? UA extension hosts an bi-annual Artificial Insemination Workshop at V-V Ranch, and has hosted a number of different events and trainings focused on rangeland management and animal handling and care. Check out info about their local team based in Prescott and Camp Verde below, as well as other Extension Specialists working in the region, and feel free to reach out with questions within their subject areas - they're excited to support producers in the Verde NRCD!

Have you heard about New World screwworm? To learn more about this pest and how to protect your herd, check out University of Arizona's [Screwworm Resources Page](#).

U of A Monitoring Update: June 2026

As you all can imagine, things tend to slow down quite a bit during summer. Plants are not easy to identify at this time of year, and the temperature always makes things more difficult. Traditionally, this is the time of year I do the majority of my ground-truthing for fall monitoring sites. Basically, I go out to the field and wander around looking for the 6-inch-tall angle irons that mark a classic Forest Service site. Harder than you would think, and it saves time when it comes to the fall monitoring, as we can walk right up to the site without kicking around in the grass looking for these sneaky stakes.

This also tends to be a good time of year to hold (air-conditioned) meetings discussing either last year's monitoring reports or the upcoming fall monitoring. I know many people have reached out and expressed interest this year, and I have already scheduled Forest Service for this upcoming fall, so double check with your range specialist to see if you are on the list this year. If you are going to be monitored this year and this is your first time, I would recommend having a meeting with your specialist and UA Extension to coordinate dates as well as receive a more detailed explanation for what trend monitoring is, the process we tend to go through, and how it can benefit your operation. We also always encourage you to participate in the actual monitoring for at least one site.

Other than these meetings, monitoring tends to be focused on utilization this time of year. Although UA Extension is not as involved with utilization monitoring as trend monitoring, I am more than happy to lend a hand if either Forest Service or the rancher requests.

Excitingly, U of A Extension and V-V Ranch are going to host a monitoring field day last week of October as Extension completes an annual monitoring of the ranch. Local ranchers and range personnel are invited and encouraged to attend this event, as it will provide further information on monitoring, as well as give a course on how to monitor. This is a great opportunity to learn more and receive training on monitoring. If you have any questions, please contact Jake Hennig at jhennig@arizona.edu or Travis Lyons at lyonst@arizona.edu.

That's all I have to report for the summer. I hope to see some of you in the field this fall! Extension Specialists working in the region, and feel free to reach out with questions within their subject areas - they're excited to support producers in the Verde NRCD!

Funding Opportunities

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<https://www.windmillmountainranch.com/s/FSA.pdf>

<https://www.windmillmountainranch.com/s/National-Forest-Foundation.pdf>

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