

Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge and Cabeza Prieta Natural History Association – Successes and Failures of a ‘Friends Group’

Presented by:

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Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge
Established in 1939
3rd Largest Refuge in Lower 48 States
Over 860,000 acres

Protects Sonoran Desert Habitat






**Lead on Endangered Sonoran
Pronghorn Recovery**

A bighorn sheep with large, curved horns is standing on a rocky, desert slope. The sheep is facing right and appears to be in a natural, rugged environment. The background consists of light-colored, layered rock formations and sparse, dry vegetation.

**Supports Healthy Desert
Bighorn Sheep Populations**

A photograph of a desert landscape. In the foreground, there are several bushes of bright yellow wildflowers. A large, dark tree branch extends from the upper left across the top of the frame. In the background, there are brown, rocky mountains under a clear blue sky. The text "Largest Refuge Wilderness in Lower 48 States" is overlaid in white, bold font in the center-right of the image.

**Largest Refuge Wilderness
in Lower 48 States**

Shares 56 Miles of International Border With Mexico





**Active Immigrant and Drug
Smuggling Corridor**

Cabeza Prieta Natural History Association (CPNHA)

Established in 1995 in Ajo, AZ
To Conduct the Business of
Promotion of Educational and
Interpretive Activities of the **U.S.
Fish and Wildlife Service** in
Concert with Preservation at the
**Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife
Refuge** as Well as Promoting
Interest in, and Knowledge of, the
Sonoran Desert in Southwestern
Arizona
501(c)(3).



Activities Include:

- Guided Natural History Hikes
- Lecture Series
- Members Meetings
- Books and Gifts for Sale
- Annual Sonoran Shindig
- Sonoran Shindig Photo Contest
- Support of Ajo Science Symposium



A photograph of a person in a white t-shirt and dark pants working on a wooden structure in a desert landscape. The person is bent over, possibly using a power tool. In the background, there are informational signs, one of which reads "Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge". The ground is sandy and there are some desert plants. The sky is clear and blue.

Membership = 250 – 275

**Bookstore at Refuge Visitor Center
Bookstore Generated >\$9,000 in 2014
Membership Generated \$535 in 2014**

Provided \$300 to the Refuge in 2014

**Also Provided Volunteers and Promoted the
Refuge**

<http://cabezaprieta.org/>

Change in Management

- **2010 – Refuge management opened Refuge public use roads to All Terrain Vehicle use.**
- **Analyzed and approved under 2007 Land Use Plan.**
- **Not implemented by previous Refuge management.**
- **CPNHA Board and some Members did not agree.**
- **Long term Volunteers and CPNHA Members left the Refuge.**
- **Caused a rift between CPNWR and CPNHA Board which still continues.**



CPNWR/CPNHA Agreement

- From 2006 through 2014, CPNHA worked with and operated a bookstore at CPNWR through a Cooperative Agreement (CA).
- CA expired in 2011.
- Started working with CPNHA in 2013 on a new CA.
- Draft CA completed in March 2014.
- CA was never finalized.

USFWS New 'Friends Policy'

- Part 633 Friends Organization (633FW1) finalized as policy in April, 2014.
- 633FW1 provided policy, guidance, and administrative procedures for FWS to establish and work with Friends Organizations.
- 633FW1 Defined a 'Friends' as having an organizational mission of supporting the FWS service site which they are affiliated.
- **Main Sticking Point** – CPNHA originally established to support CPNWR “and Promoting Interest in and Knowledge of the Sonoran Desert.”



- Requirement to keep CPNHA Bookstore at CPNWR was signing a new Friends Partnership Agreement under 633FW1 **and** changing their mission to focus solely on the refuge.
- After several discussions
- Meeting with FWS R2 Friends Coordinator
- CPNHA felt they could not amend their mission to focus solely on the CPNWR as 633FW1 required **and** sign a Friends Partnership Agreement.

SO – THEY WALKED

**OUT OF THE VISITOR CENTER
OUT OF THE CPNWR
OUT OF THE RELATIONSHIP**



FALLOUT

Natural History Association has rift with Fish & Wildlife

Since its beginnings some twenty years ago, Cabeza Prieta Natural History Association has served the community of Ajo through a two-part, primarily educational, mission, according to the association's executive board. The first part of the CPNHA mission has been that of providing assistance to the local wildlife refuge. This assistance has taken many forms, such as helping to enlist volunteers for the pronghorn recovery project, building a nature trail and managing a bookstore at the visitor center, repairing facilities at the Childs Mountain overlook, and guiding Childs Mountain tours.

The second part of CPNHA's mission is reflected in services conducted as an independent organization. The following activities are just some of the ways CPNHA has been fulfilling the second part of its mission: sponsoring as many as seven free public lectures between January and March; supporting, both financially and with volunteer helpers, three Sonoran Symposiums; organizing projects like the removal of graffiti from the rock faces on either side of Highway 85 where it passes through the Crater Range; and conducting nature walks in the surrounding desert, along with maintaining a website at www.cabezaprieta.org that receives three quarters of a million "hits" per year. CPNHA has also been instrumental in the planning and carrying out of every Sonoran Shindig since the first of these annual festivals was held many years

CPNHA BY-LAWS AMENDED

2004

Character of Affairs: “...promotion of educational and interpretive activities of the **U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**, in concert with preservation of natural resources at the **Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge**, as well as **promoting interest in**, and knowledge of, the Sonoran Desert in southwestern Arizona.”

2015

Character of Affairs: “The promotion of educational and interpretive activities intended to **enhance understanding and appreciation** of the natural history of the Sonoran Desert in southwestern Arizona and **to raise concern for the preservation of** this unique natural environment.”

Reflections

- 2010 Decision to allow ATV use on the Refuge struck to the core values of some **CPNHA** Board Members.
- Set the wheels in motion to distance themselves from **CPNWR**. New FWS Friends Policy was the final straw.
- **CPNHA** Board Members rarely change, just rotate positions. Original core values are still present. (Change in By-Laws).
- Board Members seem relieved not to **HAVE** to work with Refuge.
- One Board Member is a good friend – we just do not talk about **CPNHA**.
- More Nature Walks on the Refuge in 2015.

QUESTIONS and DISCUSSION

