

# USACE Natural Resource Management

## Mammals



### Sonoran Pronghorn

### FAST FACTS

**REASONS FOR CURRENT STATUS:** The Sonoran pronghorn is a geographically and genetically distinct subspecies of pronghorn which historically occupied Arizona and California. This subspecies was included in the first list of endangered species in 1967 under the Endangered Species Preservation Act. It is currently considered to be endangered across its range, except where considered an experimental, non-essential population.

Threats to the Sonoran pronghorn include the destruction, modification, or curtailment of habitat. Habitat loss has stemmed from urbanization, highway development, mining, agriculture, and livestock grazing. Additionally this subspecies' population has been negatively impacted by disease due to interaction with cattle, predation, and a lack of genetic diversity. (USFWS)

**MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION:** At the time of listing, critical habitat was not required to be designated. No critical habitat has been designated for this subspecies. However, a recover plan was developed in 1982 and subsequently revised in 2016.

In 2003, the USFWS and its partners began a captive breeding program. The Service worked with other agencies and Mexico to capture seven Sonoran pronghorns to begin the captive breeding program. By 2012 the program had successfully bred and released 91 pronghorns, bringing the total wild population to about 160 animals. In the 2016 USFWS recovery plan revision, the estimated date of recovery for this subspecies was thought to be 2036. (USFWS)

**HABITAT NEEDS:** The Sonoran pronghorn is found only in the Lower Colorado River Valley and the Arizona Upland subdivisions of the Sonoran Desertscrub Biome of southwestern Arizona and northwestern Sonora, Mexico.

- During the winter, this pronghorn shows a preference for sparsely-vegetated, flat, open spaces which provide ample space for visual detection of predators and swift running.
- In the summer, the subspecies requires denser vegetation which provides thermal cover and moister forage. (USFWS)
  - Sonoran pronghorn are nomadic and move in response to changing forage conditions and water availability.

**Appearance:** This subspecies is smaller and lighter than other pronghorns. Males weigh up to 130 pounds while females may weigh up to 110 pounds. Shoulder height is about three feet, slightly smaller than a white-tailed deer. These pronghorns have white bands across the neck and a 2-4 inch long black mane along the back of the neck. The upper body is light brown while the underbelly and rump is white. Males also have a black mask and cheek patches. (USFWS)

*Photos: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*

*Natural Resource Management (NRM)*

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**USACE NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ROLE:** The Sonoran pronghorn has not been tracked in the Engineering Research and Development Center's Threatened and Endangered Species Team Cost Estimates Database. Across the nation USACE works to ensure that project management does not have negative impacts to species of conservation concern, such as the Sonoran pronghorn.

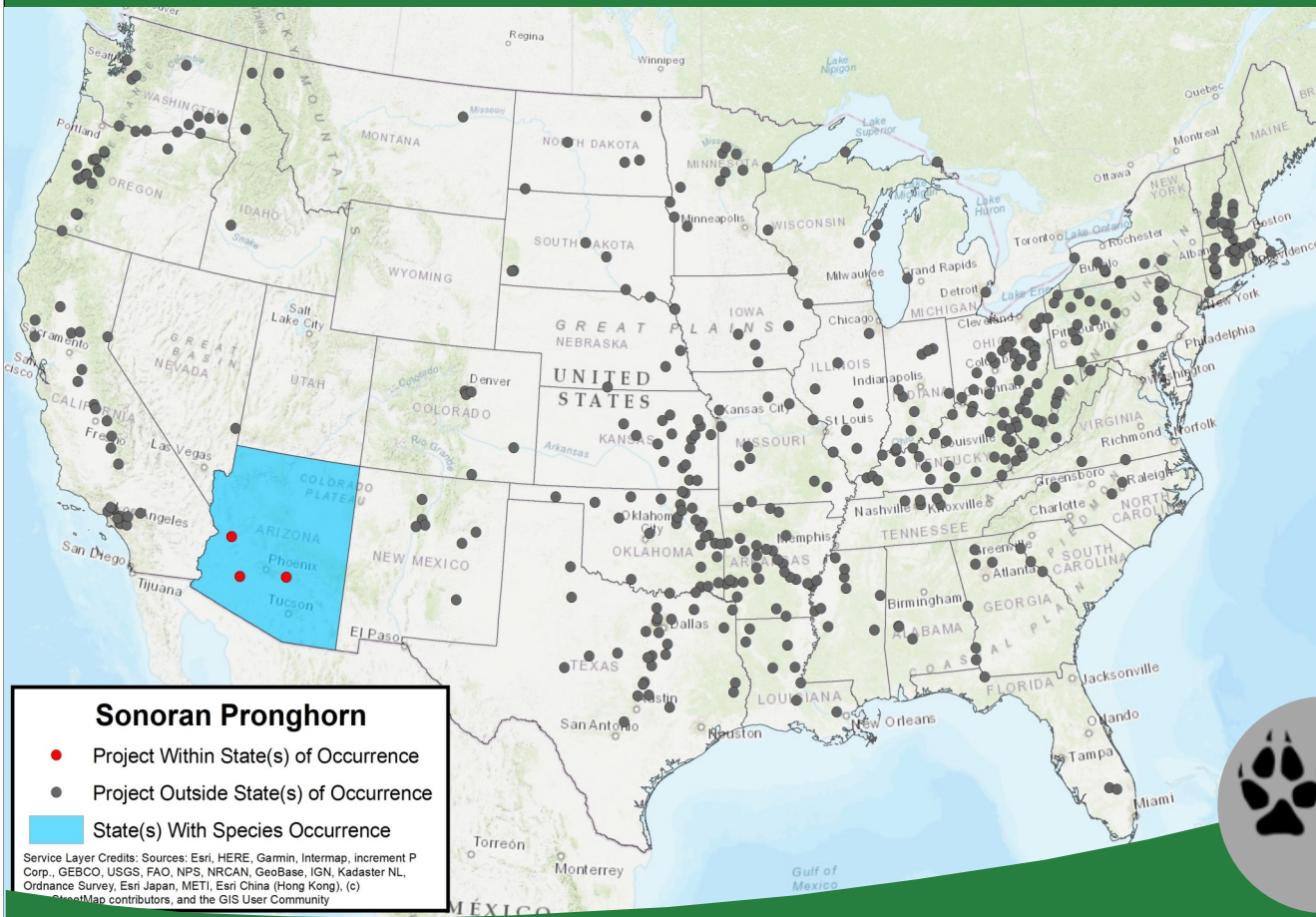


*Photo, Left:* An image taken inside Kofa National Wildlife Refuge. Here, USFWS breeds and releases Sonoran Pronghorn. USACE's Red Rock Dam project is within the refuge.

**WHAT IS USACE NRM DOING:** Due to its restricted range and small distribution, the Sonoran pronghorn was only listed by a single project

in FY20 NRM Assessment. Los Angeles District's Red Rock Dam, located in Yuma, Arizona, is noted to have the potential for this subspecies to occur.

Red Rock Dam is operated by the USACE but located within the USFWS's Kofa National Wildlife Refuge. More than 80% of Kofa National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) was designated as wilderness in 1990 under the Arizona Desert Wilderness Act. This designation along with a geographical location within the Sonoran pronghorn's historical range made Kofa NWR an ideal location for the Service to establish a captive-breeding pen for the pronghorn. In 2011, a 320-acre breeding pen was established at Kofa NWR. In the spring of 2012, the first fawns were born within the pen. By January of 2013, the first group of pronghorns were released on the refuge to roam freely.



Source: Map provided by Ashleigh Boss, ORISE Fellow, Institute for Water Resources

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