

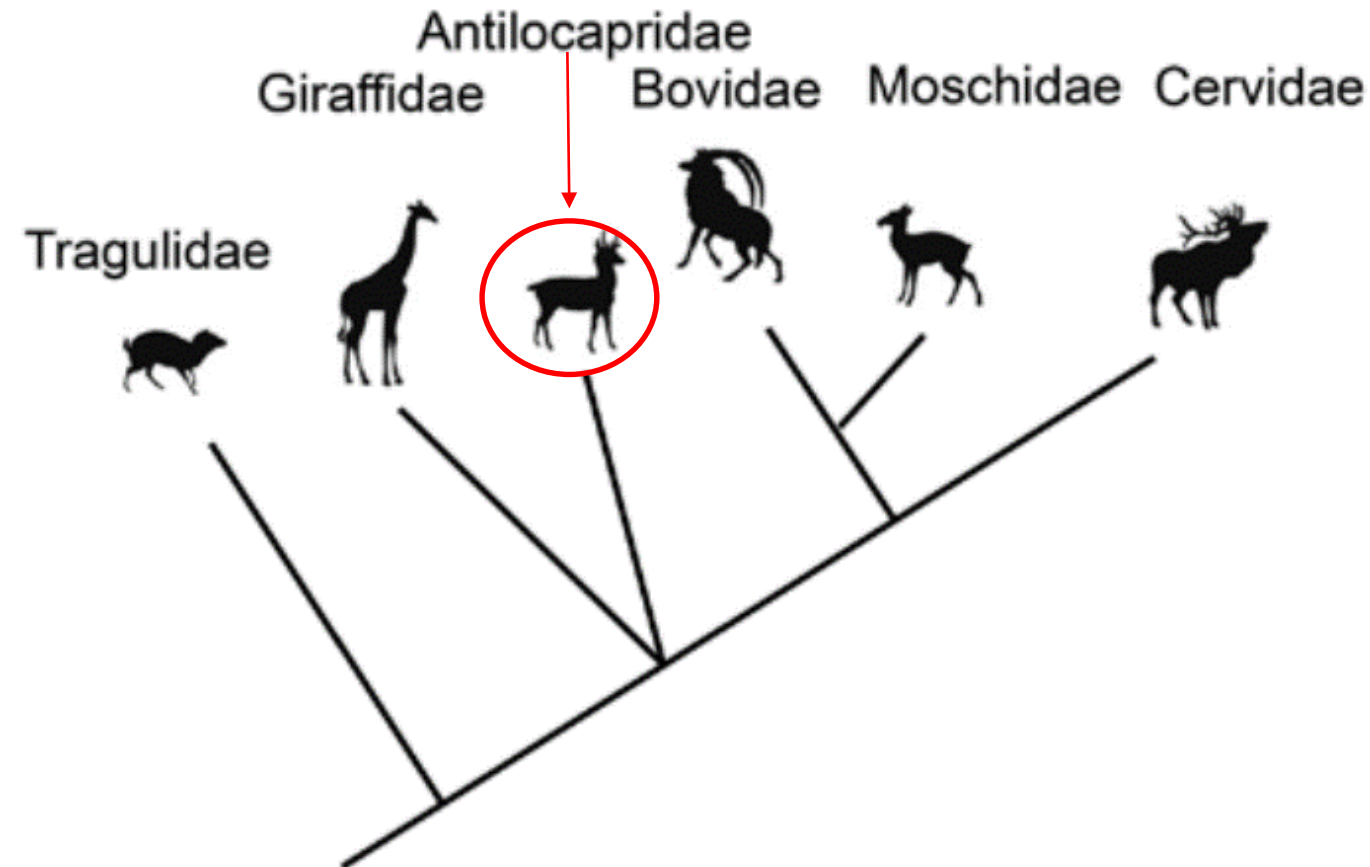
REESTABLISHMENT OF PRONGHORN TO SOUTHEASTERN CALIFORNIA

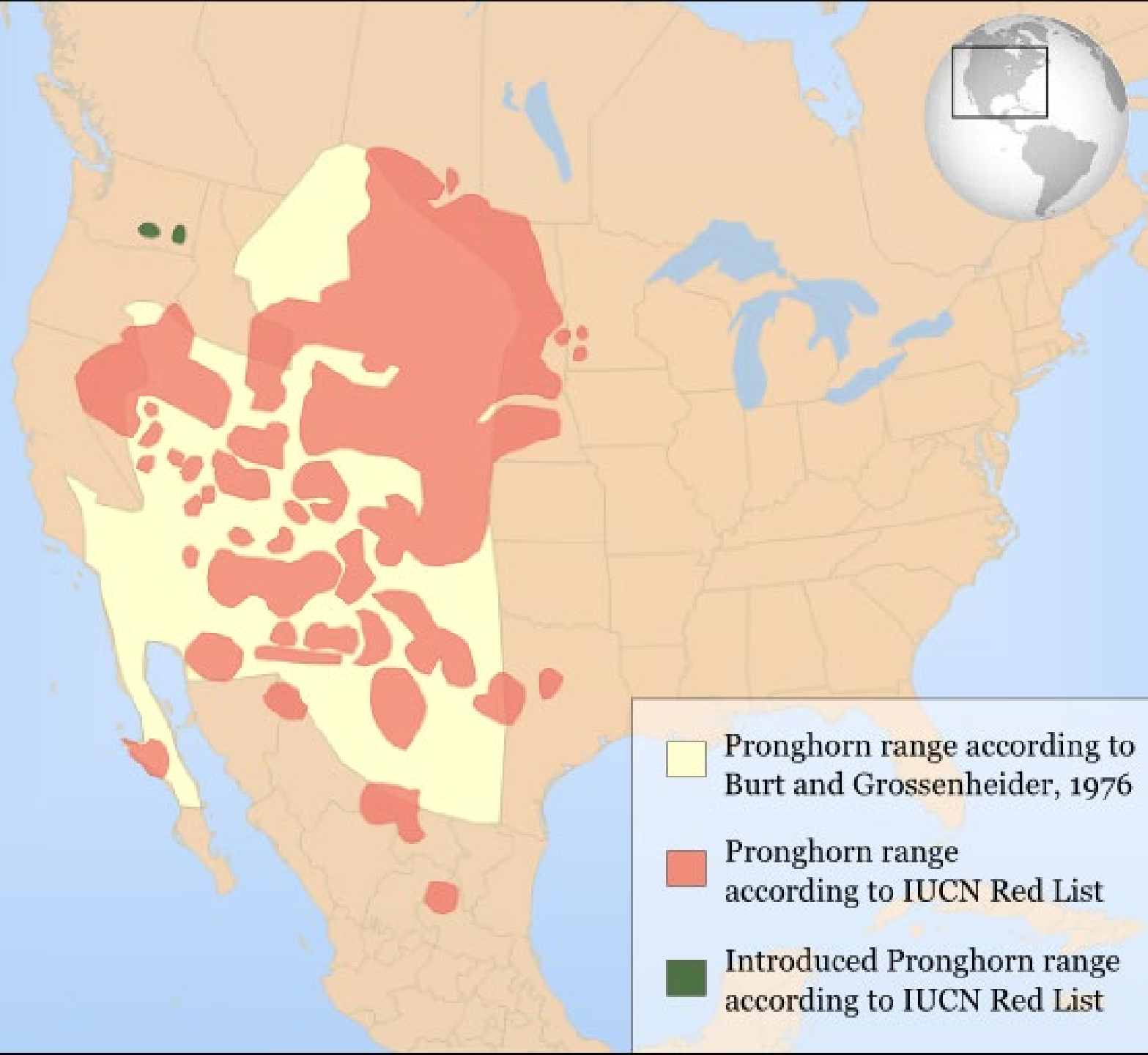
PROPOSED NONESSENTIAL
EXPERIMENTAL POPULATION(S)
under SECTION 10(j) of the
ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT



Pronghorn (*Antilocapra americana*)

- Pronghorn are the only surviving species of the genus *Antilocapra* and family *Antilocapridae* (the “antelope-goats”). *Antilocapridae* is endemic to North America, and most closely related to *Giraffidae* (Giraffes and Okapi) its sister taxa within the superfamily *Giraffoidea*.



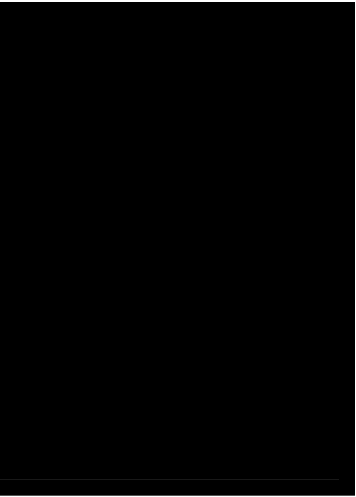


Pronghorn (*Antilocapra americana*)

- Pronghorn were once as prominent as bison in North America—from southern Canada to central Mexico
- Pronghorn subspecies:
 - I. American Pronghorn (*A. a. americana*),
 - II. Sonoran Pronghorn (*A. a. sonoriensis*), and
 - III. Baja California Pronghorn (*A. a. peninsularis*)

Desert adapted subspecies





Sonoran Pronghorn (*Antilocapra americana sonoriensis*)

- The smallest and lightest in color of all subspecies
- Native to Sonoran Desert and adapted to hot, arid environments
- Diet consists of shrubs, cacti, grasses, and annuals
- Threats:
 - historical – cattle grazing, hunting, and others
 - today – habitat loss, fragmentation, and OHV



History of the Sonoran Pronghorn

1940s – Extirpated from California

1967 -- Listed under Endangered Species Preservation Act of 1966

2002 -- US population declined from several hundred to 21 animals, during prolonged drought

2003 - Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) established captive breeding population

2010 – Designated a Nonessential Experimental Population in Arizona

2011 – Established a second captive breeding population at Kofa NWR

2016 – Revised Recovery Plan – with objective to reestablish in historic range of California, if feasible

2017 – Initiate process to reestablish Nonessential Experimental Population in southeastern California

2021 – The Living Desert Zoo, assisted by USFWS and CDFW, received Section 6 funding to Study the feasibility of reestablishing Sonoran pronghorn to the Chuckwalla Bench of California

What is a Nonessential Experimental Population?

- Section 10(j), incorporated as an amendments to ESA in 1982, introduced experimental populations to the ESA's recovery tool box.
- Experimental populations are located outside of an endangered or threatened species' current range and can even occur outside of a species historical range.
- Experimental populations are further classified as either “essential” to the continued existence of an endangered or threatened species or “non-essential” to the continued existence of an endangered or threatened species
- In our instance, the Service has determined that ongoing human activities that are in compliance of existing local, State, Tribal, and Federal laws, regulations, and ordinances would not significantly conflict with Sonoran pronghorn conservation in the proposed Nonessential Experimental Population (NEP) area.
- Furthermore, most ESA prohibitions do not apply to experimental populations. This means that the prohibitions and exemptions necessary and appropriate to conserve the NEP will be crafted within put from all interested Tribes as well as other land management partners.
- We anticipate the need to prohibit the intentional take of Sonoran pronghorn (e.g., shooting, trapping, chasing, capturing, etc.) and recommend that fences within the NEP have an 18 inch gap between the bottom smooth wire and the ground.

California – Alternative Population Reestablishment Areas

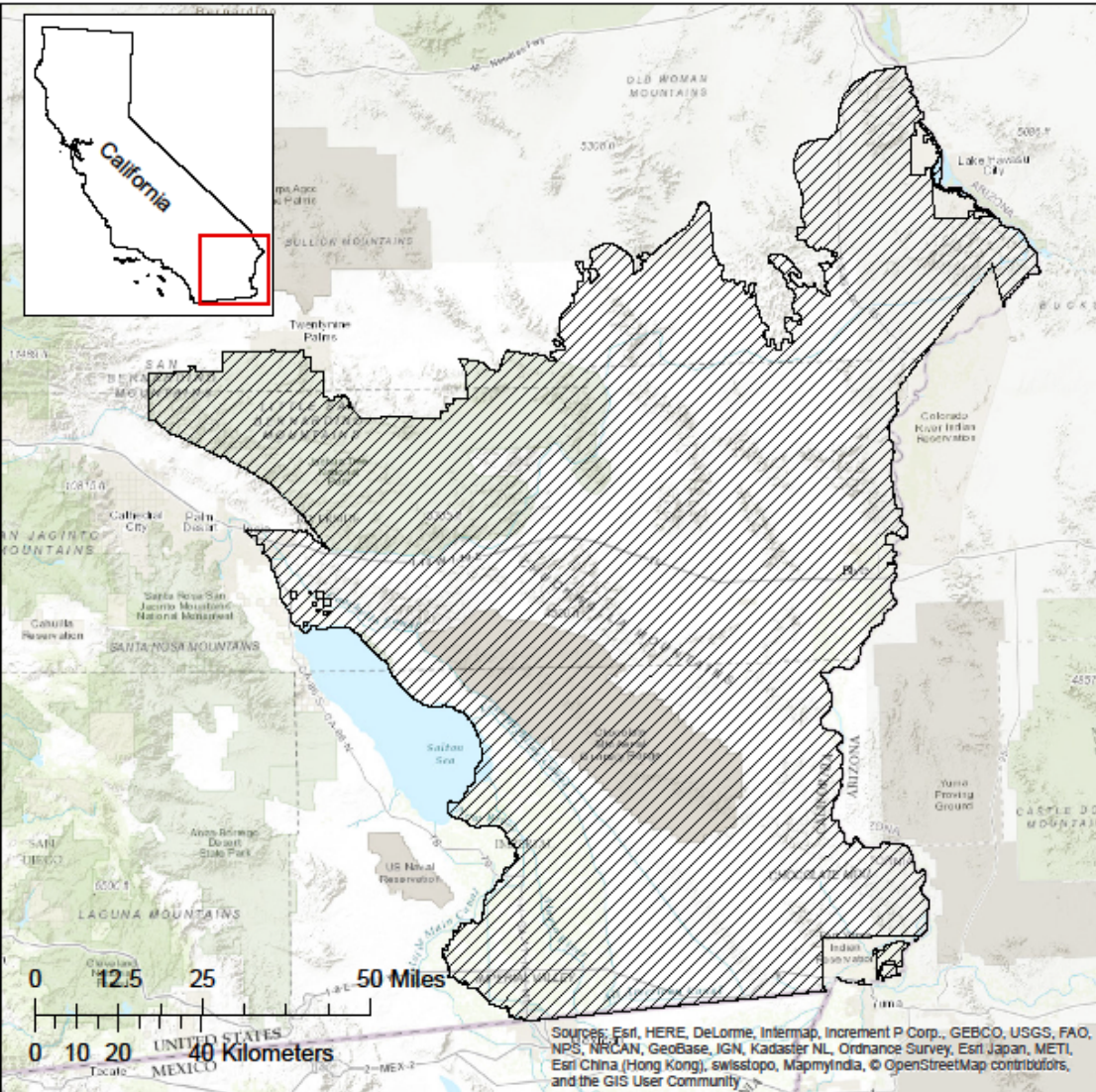
- Anza-Borrego Desert State Park
- Rice Valley
- Chuckwalla Bench-Milpitas Wash

Recovery Team conducted a habitat suitability analysis of the three areas

- Selected Chuckwalla Bench-Milpitas Wash based on superior environmental parameters:
 - Historic presence
 - Presence of key resources (food, water, cover)
 - Vegetation structure and species composition (succulents important)
 - Suitable topography
 - Potential barriers to movement
 - Land ownership/land use conflicts
 - Water sources
 - Sources of disturbance
 - Potential for population expansion



Draft Colorado Desert Nonessential Experimental Population of Sonoran Pronghorn (*Antilocapra americana sonoriensis*)



Legend

 Proposed Sonoran Pronghorn Nonessential Experimental Population



Current Partners in California Reestablishment Effort

Bureau of Land Management

Chocolate Mountains Aerial Gunnery Range (US Marine Corps)

US Border Patrol

California Department of Fish and Wildlife

Arizona Game and Fish Department

Sonoran Pronghorn Recovery Team

San Diego Natural History Museum

Safari Club International

Desert Wildlife Unlimited

Mojave Desert Land Trust

The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens



Next Steps - Reestablishing Sonoran Pronghorn in California

USFWS is now ready to initiate informal coordination with a broad range of interest groups:

Tribes, local, and State agencies, NGOs, user groups, general public

- Answer questions
- Address concerns
- Improve or modify the proposed project
- Solicit comments

Formal Rulemaking Process: propose and approve a special rule to designate a Nonessential Experimental Population under 50 *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 17.84

- *Federal Register* notice with proposed regulation and background information
- Public comment period – specified in the notice
- Respond to comments and adjust proposal, as appropriate
- *Federal Register* notice announcing decision to withdraw proposal or approve the regulation to designate a NEP

A photograph of a pronghorn antelope standing in a dry, open landscape with sparse vegetation and distant mountains. A large white thought bubble is superimposed on the right side of the image, containing the word "Questions?". Three small white circles lead from the antelope's head to the thought bubble.

Questions?