



Staff Report

Agenda Item: **Letter Of Support To Arizona Game And Fish In Support Of Mexican Gartersnake Study** – Approval of a letter of support to the Arizona Game and Fish Department on behalf of Erika Nowak’s request for funding of a study of the Mexican Gartersnake range.

Sponsored By: Doug Von Gausig, Mayor

Staff Contact: Walt Good, Deputy Town Clerk

Meeting Date: November 10, 2009

Background: Dr. Erika Nowak, of Northern Arizona University, is seeking funding and permission to conduct a crucial study of the range of the threatened Mexican Gartersnake in our area of Arizona. The Town of Clarkdale realizes that habitat for this species has been shirking alarmingly over the past decade and that our understanding of this and other surrogate species is vital to the preservation of critical habitat.

Recommendation: Approval of a letter of support to the Arizona Game and Fish Department on behalf of Erika Nowak’s request for funding of a study of the Mexican Gartersnake range.



Office of the Mayor

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November 10, 2009

Robyn Beck, Heritage Funds Program Coordinator
Arizona Game and Fish Department
5000 W. Carefree Highway
Phoenix, Arizona 85086-5000

Dear Ms. Beck,

Dr. Erika Nowak, of Northern Arizona University is seeking funding and permissions to conduct a crucial study of the range of the threatened Mexican Gartersnake in our area of Arizona. The Town of Clarkdale realizes that habitat for this species has been shrinking alarmingly over the past decade, and that our understanding of this and other surrogate species is vital to preservation of critical habitat. Dr. Nowak's study includes:

- 1) Documenting populations of Mexican Gartersnakes in the northern edge of the species range; and
- 2) Expanding 2008 telemetry study of Mexican Gartersnake at Bubbling Ponds Fish Hatchery to less disturbed natural systems to determine habitat use and range size.

The Mexican Gartersnake is a federal and state species of concern. The 2008 US Fish and Wildlife Service decision "warranted but precluded from listing" (as threatened or endangered) is currently being reconsidered by the Service. Little information is available on the habitat requirements of the species, and there has been no study of home range use in native river and cienega habitats.

Dr. Nowak is submitting a proposal to the Arizona Game and Fish Department's Heritage Fund to study Mexican Gartersnakes in the Oak Creek and Dead Horse Ranch State Park/Tavasci Marsh area of the Verde Valley. If funded, the project would begin in June 2010 and fieldwork would continue through fall of 2011 or spring of 2012, with a final report due in June 2012.

Please give this study serious consideration for funding under the Heritage Fund program.

Sincerely,

Doug Von Gausig
Mayor