

Monday, August 3, 2015

Arizona Mule Deer Foundation Chapters Host Chinese Conservation Officials



Phoenix, Ariz.: On July 25, the Mule Deer Foundation's (MDF) Arizona leadership worked with private landowners and the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) to host a delegation of Chinese wildlife experts and officials. The goal was to provide information on how conservation groups, ranchers and state agencies work together for the benefit of all wildlife using the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, and the role hunting and conservation play in wildlife management. The gathering was held at the Bar X Ranch where owners Mike and Diana Hemovich have worked with MDF and AGFD on an Adopt-A-Ranch program to coordinate conservation projects in return for maintaining public access to the ranch.



"We were thrilled to host such a prestigious delegation from China and that they were so interested in how we have successfully worked with private landowners to conserve mule deer habitat, and how that has helped so many other wildlife species," said MDF Arizona state chair, Jim Lawrence.



MDF Chapter volunteers have worked closely with the Bar X Ranch on a number of projects, logging over 640 hours on the property. Projects have included developing guzzlers for wildlife, removing cross fences and building fence to protect riparian areas, removing invasive juniper and many other projects. In return, hunters and all other recreationists have access to the Bar X Ranch. The Adopt-A-Ranch program has been successful across the state and with many private landowners.

"These collaborative arrangements to help ranchers with conservation projects on their property was the important element that we shared with the Chinese delegates," commented MDF regional director for Arizona, Terry Herndon. "In addition, we discussed the importance of managed hunting for the conservation of our wildlife and how it has been essential for maintaining populations and for funding conservation for a whole suite of other species."

The Chinese delegation was made up of China's top biologist, wildlife experts and wildlife and forest enforcement officials. These participants lead some of the primary conservation organizations in China: Wildlife Rescue Center of Guangdong Province, State Forestry Administration, China Wildlife Conservation Association, Beijing Forestry University, as well as representatives from various regions within the Forestry Department. This was the first conservation-based group from China to visit Arizona and they were invited to come to the state through the U.S. Embassy in Beijing and the U.S. State Department. The group's objective was to study conservation of wildlife and how we manage these resources here in the United States. However a highlight of their trip was the opportunity to ride some of the Bar X's horses. The group will be in the United States for over a week and had previous stops in Washington, DC and Florida before joining the MDF team in Arizona and then heading to Oregon.

"In my tenure with the MDF and conservation, I would put this event at the top of the list," said MDF board member Bob Jacobs from Flagstaff, Arizona. "I do believe that we made an impact that will make a difference for wildlife and conservation in China."