

“Walt Collins Water Catchment”

By Dick King

Part of the commitment the Arizona Bowhunters Association accepts is to enhance wildlife habitat. Over the years many hours of labor and a lot of money have been put towards development or enhancement of habitat throughout the state. The money for these projects comes from one of two venues, either the Bowhunter Happening or from proceeds from the annual ABA Awards banquet. For those of you that were at the banquet in 2002 we made an announcement that we were trying to fund a special project, the “Walt Collins Water Catchment”. It was to serve as a memorial of sorts for a man that gave unselfishly for many years to the ABA and spearheaded many projects that we all benefit from today. At the 2002 Banquet we had a couple specific items that we auctioned off and the proceeds were dedicated to the “Walt Collins Project”. With those funds and other monies that we had set aside for this we were able to fund a 15,000 gallon water catchment in the Harcuvar Mountains near Alamo Lake.

This project had actually been on paper for several years with the Game and Fish Department. John Hervert out of the Yuma office had been working towards getting this development in the ground for a long time. They were short \$6,700.00 which the ABA provided. That certainly was not the total cost for this project, as a matter of fact over \$20,000.00 of donated money went into the ground the weekend of March 1, 2003. The second item required to make a project like this happen is labor. There were over 500 man hours of labor donated that weekend by men from many organizations and from several areas of the state. Besides the ABA the Arizona Game and Fish Department was there in big numbers, the Yuma Valley Rod and Gun Club was there as they seem to be on so many projects and men that don't belong to any organization. They just showed up to give of their time.

The work actually started a couple years back with the filing of permits etc: and that actually delayed the project some but those things sometimes can be expected. The physical part of the project started with getting the three 5,000 gallon tanks to the work site. They were loaded onto a semi-trailer in Yuma and hauled to within about 6 miles of the actual site, which was as far as they could go. Then they were loaded onto another smaller flat bed trailer and hauled the final 6 miles one at a time. This took the entire day of Friday. With very difficult terrain to navigate and getting stuck, blowing out tires and just plain slow going it was challenging. For three days Leon ran the backhoe and did the digging while others were hauling in tanks, using shovels to back fill, build fence, create a small diversion dam, bury pipes and finally, late Sunday afternoon cleaning up.

This water collection system has been created by Leon Lesicka of Desert Wildlife Unlimited. It is a very proven system that consists of three 5,000 gallon fiberglass storage tanks buried in the ground. A diversion dam of sorts was created in small water shed to funnel water into feeder pipes that would fill those tanks. The water shed was several acres in stead of a few hundred square feet which is typical with an apron type system. The final component of the system is a drinker that is set into the ground at the same level as the tanks. The water will have a static level in the drinker the same as it is in the storage tanks. There are zero moving parts, there is no parts exposed to the elements, and it should be near maintenance free for many years. Life expectancy is

well over 100 years but in reality that is a best guess. I don't think that any of us that worked on the project will be here in 100 years to see!!

It wasn't all work though. Saturday night we had a BBQ of Elk steaks and beans with baked potatoes and other goodies. The opportunity to relax and get to know one another reminded me of sitting around the campfire after a long day in the field with your hunting buddies. That is where a lot of friendships are made and I am sure that they were that night also!

There are many people to be thanked for their efforts, to many to mention here. The Yuma Valley Rod and Gun Club, the Arizona Game and Fish Dept., Desert Wildlife Unlimited and the ABA members. Without people and organizations such as these, projects like this would never go beyond the planning stages.