



MEMORANDUM

Date: October 26, 2007

To: Chairman and Members
Pima County Bond Advisory Committee

NLF FOR
From: Bill Roe, Chairman
Conservation Acquisition Commission

Re: **Conservation Acquisition Commission Recommendations - Conservation Acquisition Program**

Background

At the request of the Bond Advisory Committee, the Conservation Acquisition Commission was tasked with developing recommendations for continued funding of the Conservation Acquisition Program, and for Historic Preservation bond projects, for a possible 2008 bond election. Recommendations for Historic Preservation bond projects will be forwarded to the Bond Advisory Committee under a separate memorandum.

The Commission was established in compliance with the County's Truth in Bonding code, after the 2004 bond election, as an advisory commission to oversee implementation of the 1997 and 2004 Conservation Acquisition Programs. The Commission has been meeting once a month on average since June 2004. The Board of Supervisors approved all but two of the recommended purchases, for a total of 39 properties acquired, totaling almost 26,000 acres, along with 86,000 acres of State grazing leases and Federal grazing permits, for a total expenditure of \$75 million. This includes properties acquired with both 1997 and 2004 bond funds. In addition, prior to the appointment of this Commission, another 7,000 acres were acquired at a cost of \$21.8 million under the 1997 bond program.

Funding from the 1997 bond program, which totaled \$27.9 million, is almost fully expended, with \$3.3 million remaining for the acquisition of Tumamoc Hill and land around Tortolita Mountain Park. It has been difficult to expend these remaining dollars, as much of the eligible land is State Trust land. The Commission continues to work with County staff to research the best possible options for conserving State Trust land.

Forty-four percent of the \$164.3 million from the 2004 bond program has been expended to date. The slow down in the residential market has already resulted in sellers approaching the County at prices reduced from recent years, which should provide good opportunities for the County to fully expend the remaining bond funds within the next couple of years.

Need

When the Steering Committee for the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan wrapped up their recommendations to the Board of Supervisors in 2003, their recommendations included, among other items: (1) a bond election to acquire property for conservation, (2) a map of approximately 524,000 acres of the highest priority biologically important lands in Eastern Pima County to target for acquisition through such a bond election, and (3) recognition that additional lands important to the community should also be included in such a bond election. The highest priority biologically important lands became known as the Habitat Protection Priorities, and the other lands became known as Community Open Space. The Community Open Space properties totaled approximately 16,000 acres.

The bond package taken to the voters in May 2004 included \$164.3 million for such properties. Information provided to voters by the County was clear to point out that the amount of acreage identified in the program far exceeded the \$163.4 million proposed for approval. The 2004 voter-approved bond fund allocation for conservation acquisitions is to be the first of many future allocations that will be needed to achieve the goals of the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan.

Progress

Since the inception of the 2004 Conservation Acquisition Bond Program, significant strides have been made with regard to achieving the goals of the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan. Of the 540,000 thousand acres identified as eligible for purchase in the 2004 bond program, 21,000 have been purchased by the County and another 44,000 are grazing leases now held by the County and managed for conservation as part of ranch management agreements. This means the County owns and manages for conservation approximately 12 percent of the lands identified. The County and the Commission will continue to target remaining properties for conservation with the remaining 2004 bond funds. Clearly additional funds will be needed.

State Trust Land

Of the 540,000 acres identified as eligible for purchase in the 2004 bond program, 80 percent is State Trust land. These include both rural ranch lands and lands within the urban area such as Tumamoc Hill. Of the seven ranches acquired through this program, 79 percent of the land within the ranches is State Trust land. Although there have been numerous efforts at State Trust land reform, none have been successful, and the State Land Department still insists that the land can only be sold to the highest bidder at public auction. This continues to impede the ability of the County to permanently conserve large landscapes.

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In the meantime, the County is managing State Trust land within ranches for conservation by holding the grazing leases. However, those grazing leases are only good for 10-year periods. It is imperative that State Trust land reform occurs for meaningful, permanent, and large landscape conservation to become a reality. In the meantime, the Commission and the County continue to strategize about how to conserve State Trust land identified by the voters for conservation in both the 1997 and 2004 bond programs.

Development of Recommendations for a Possible 2008 Bond Election

In May 2006, the Commission began the task of developing recommendations to the Bond Advisory Committee on lands to include in a possible 2008 bond program, and an appropriate dollar amount to request. The Commission began by including all lands eligible for acquisition in the 1997 and 2004 bond programs, but not yet acquired. Lands that have been developed were deleted. The remaining Habitat Protection Priorities were updated based on the best available science. The lands associated with County-held grazing leases that were not in previous bond programs, were added. Lands associated with six key wildlife corridors were included. Several properties were also added to Community Open Space. A map of the recommended properties is attached.

We received numerous requests from neighborhood groups, homeowner associations, conservation organizations, community conservation advocates, Saguaro National Park, Town of Marana, and Town of Oro Valley. Many of these advocates either attended our meetings or sent letters requesting addition of certain properties. The properties requested for inclusion by the Town of Marana and Town of Oro Valley were included as Habitat Protection Priorities and Community Open space. The Commission added the majority of the remainder of the requests to Community Open Space.

The total acreage recommended now by the Commission totals 621,918 acres. The total requested bond dollar amount recommended by the Commission for this program is \$285 million. The recommended lands fall into 2 categories: (1) Community Open Space and (2) Habitat Protection Priorities and Associated Lands. Consistent with the 2004 bond program, the Commission recommends that no more than 25 percent the bond funds be allocated to Community Open Space, and no less than 75 percent be allocated to Habitat Protection Priorities and Associated Lands.

On average, the County has spent \$2,700 an acre acquiring land in fee simple with 2004 bond funds. Assuming the majority of land acquisitions made with bond funds approved at a future bond election occur after the residential market has recovered, and assuming the average cost per acre increases by 10 to 20 percent, to \$3,000 to \$3,240 an acre, \$285 million would buy between 88,000 and 95,000 acres. This is approximately 15 percent of the total acreage recommended.

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Recommendations

It is respectfully recommended that the Bond Advisory Committee accept the recommendations for continued funding of the Conservation Acquisition Program at a level of \$285 million for a possible 2008 bond election.

Project sheets for the two categories are attached. Summaries of the Commissions meetings are available on the County bond web site at www.bonds.pima.gov, or upon request.

Attachments

c: The Honorable Chairman and Members, Pima County Board of Supervisors
C.H. Huckelberry, County Administrator
Nicole Fyffe, Executive Assistant to the County Administrator

Department: County Administrator's Office – Conservation Bond Program

2008 Bond Election Proposed Projects Template

Priority: A

Project Name: Habitat Protection Priorities and Associated Lands

Location: Numerous eligible properties throughout eastern Pima County.

Scope: Purchase for conservation as many of the eligible properties within this category as possible with the funds available. The Habitat Protection Priorities were developed in 2003 in order to identify the most biologically important lands to protect first under Pima County's Multi-Species Conservation Plan and Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan. The Habitat Protection Priorities were updated in 2006 to reflect information not available in 2003, and to delete properties that were purchased by Pima County since 2003, and to delete properties that were developed since 2003. The lands identified as Habitat Protection Priorities include a wide range of invaluable natural areas critical to the survival of numerous vulnerable plants and animals in Pima County, and critical to the protection of water quality and flood prevention for residents of Pima County. The types of properties range from large working ranches containing high quality semi-desert grasslands, to small properties containing important riparian areas. Other lands associated with the Habitat Protection Priorities include County-held State grazing lease lands and wildlife corridors and habitat linkages.

NOT ALL ELIGIBLE PROPERTIES WILL BE ACQUIRED: The number of properties within the Habitat Protection Priorities is in excess of the number that can be purchased with the proposed bond fund allocation. Pima County acquired lands within these Habitat Protection Priorities with 2004 bond funds. The 2008 bond program will enable Pima County to continue efforts to acquire more of these invaluable natural areas.

Benefits: Acquiring these properties will expand Pima County's reserve of natural open spaces, protecting scenic views, recreational opportunities, biological and cultural resources, and natural floodplain functions. Conserving these natural areas will ensure that public and private development projects can continue in areas suitable for development.

Costs: \$2.6 billion or more

Bond Funding: \$213,750,000

Other Funding: Federal and State Grants

Fiscal Year Project Start and Finish Date: FY2009-2019

Project Management Jurisdiction: Pima County

Future Operating and Maintenance Costs: Based on the average cost to operate and maintain the existing natural open space parks system of Pima County, it is anticipated that future operations and maintenance will cost approximately \$60 per year per acre of added natural open space.

Regional Benefits: The eligible properties are located throughout eastern Pima County and within other jurisdictions.

Supervisor District of Project Location: ALL
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Department: County Administrator's Office – Conservation Bond Program

2008 Bond Election Proposed Projects Template

Priority: A

Project Name: Community Open Space

Location: Numerous eligible properties throughout eastern Pima County

Scope: Purchase for conservation as many of the eligible properties within this category as possible with the funds available. Many of the eligible properties were proposed for conservation by members of the public, conservation organizations, or neighborhood associations. The following property areas are eligible, and will be further defined by parcel code and map:

- A-Mountain
- Agua Caliente-Tanque Verde Confluence
- Camino de Oeste
- Catalina State Park Expansion (State Trust land)
- Colossal Cave Mountain Park Expansion (State Trust land and private land)
- Dos Picos
- Double XX Ranch
- Gerlich Property
- Green Valley West Desert Preserve (State Trust land)
- Habitat at 36th and Kino
- Kelley Ranch
- Los Morteros
- Marana Mound
- Mt. Lemmon
- Northern Altar Valley
- Rosemont Ranch
- Sabino Canyon
- Saguaro National Park East Expansion
- Saguaro National Park West Expansion
- Tortolita Mountain Park Expansion (State Trust land)
- Tucson Mountain Park Expansion (State Trust land)
- Tumamoc Hill (State Trust land)
- West End of 36th Street

NOT ALL ELIGIBLE PROPERTIES WILL BE ACQUIRED: The number of Community Open Space properties identified is in excess of the number that can be purchased with the proposed bond fund allocation. This provides the necessary flexibility during the property acquisition process. Some of these properties are eligible for purchase under the 2004 bond program, but are proposed for the 2008 bond program because the number of properties exceeds the remaining 2004 bond funds available.

Benefits: Acquiring these properties will expand Pima County's reserve of natural open spaces, protecting scenic views, recreational opportunities, biological and cultural resources, and natural floodplain functions. Conserving

these natural areas will ensure that public and private development projects can continue in areas suitable for development.

Costs: \$200,000,000 or more

Bond Funding: \$71,250,000

Other Funding: Federal and State Grants

Fiscal Year Project Start and Finish Date: FY2009-2019

Project Management Jurisdiction: Pima County

Future Operating and Maintenance Costs: Based on the average cost to operate and maintain the existing natural open space parks system of Pima County, it is anticipated that future operations and maintenance will cost approximately \$60 per year per acre of added natural open space.

Regional Benefits: The eligible properties are located throughout eastern Pima County and within other jurisdictions.

Supervisor District of Project Location: ALL

For Internal Use only:

Specific County Administrator Contemporary Issue being addressed with expenditure:

PROPOSED 2008 CONSERVATION ACQUISITION PROGRAM

Habitat Protection Priorities and Associated Lands (\$213.75 million)

Habitat Protection Priorities (553,163 acres)

- Highest Priority Private (46,392 acres)
- Secondary Priority Private (60,825 acres)
- State (445,946 acres)

Associated Lands (37,840 acres)

- Wildlife Corridors (12,190 acres)
- Non-HPP County Held State Grazing Leases (25,650 acres)

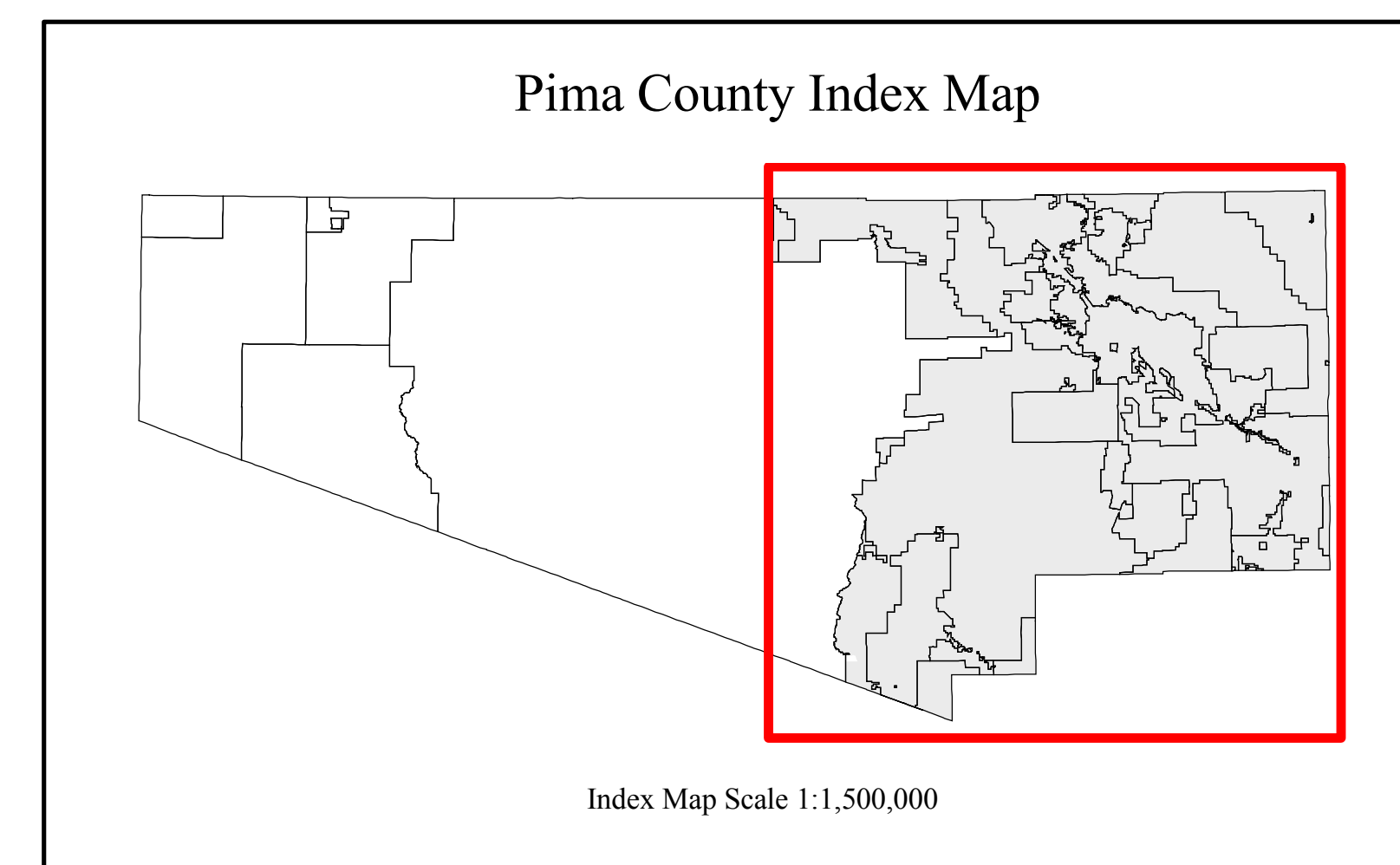
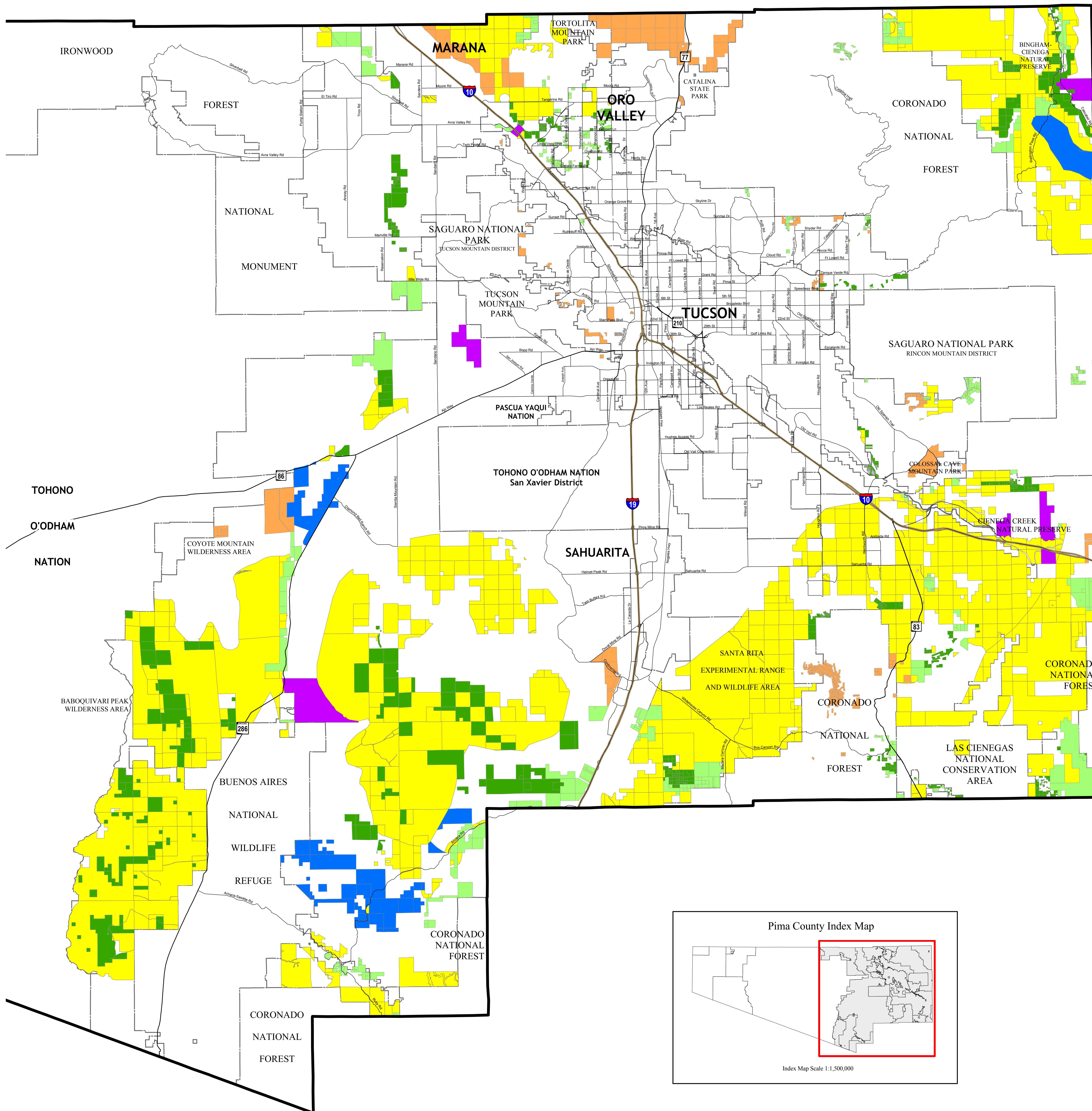
Community Open Space (\$71.25 million / 30,915 acres)

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| A MOUNTAIN | MT LEMMON |
| CAMINO DE OESTE | NORTHERN ALTAR VALLEY |
| CATALINA STATE PARK EXPANSION | ROSEMONT RANCH |
| COLOSSAL CAVE MTN PARK EXPANSION | SABINO CANYON |
| DOS PICOS | SAGUARO NATIONAL PARK EAST EXPANSION |
| DOUBLE XX RANCH | SAGUARO NATIONAL PARK WEST EXPANSION |
| GERLICH PROPERTY | TANQUE VERDE/AGUA CALIENTE CONFLUENCE |
| GREEN VALLEY WEST DESERT PRESERVE | 36TH STREET CORRIDOR |
| HABITAT AT 36TH AND KINO | TORTOLITA EAST BIOLOGICAL CORRIDOR |
| KELLEY RANCH | TORTOLITA MOUNTAIN PARK EXPANSION |
| LOS MORTEROS | TUCSON MOUNTAIN PARK EXPANSION |
| MARANA MOUND SITE | TUMAMOC HILL |

Total Acres Eligible For Acquisition: 621,918

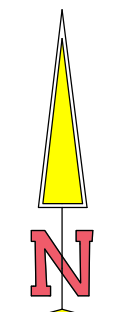
Total Request: \$285 million

NOTE: NOT ALL ELIGIBLE PROPERTIES WILL BE ACQUIRED. The number of properties identified is in excess of the number that can be purchased with the proposed bond fund allocation. This provides the necessary flexibility during the property acquisition process. Some of these properties are eligible for purchase under the 2004 bond program, but are proposed for a future bond program as well because the number of properties exceeds the remaining 2004 bond funds available.



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