



Foreword

Transformative ideas seldom emerge fully formed. Ideas that lead to lasting change typically are shaped over long and, at times, arduous discourse. And, as was the case for Pima County, effective change required thoughtful collaboration among groups that may have started out as adversaries, but through fair and open dialogue ended up coming together in the interest of a common good.

We have come a long way since 1949, when the State of Arizona first granted counties the authority to plan and zone. Like other fast growing counties, Pima went through its share of 'growing pains' and lessons learned. However, beginning in the late nineties, the County embarked on a decade-long planning effort that broke new ground and changed the face of Pima County – the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan.

Pima County has been recognized in recent years as a national leader in a kind of planning that restores some of what we have lost by reframing the elements of regional planning to encompass the relationship that land has to natural and cultural resources and acknowledges the interdependence of human, plant and animal communities. Former Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt called it "urban bioplanning."

Babbitt noted in a 1999 congressional subcommittee hearing that there was no other higher priority for funding in his department than the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan, and testified that this Plan "really is the most exciting event of its kind anywhere in the United States."

Ten years later, the goals of the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan continue to be at the forefront of County land use and environmental planning efforts. Our land acquisition programs are an extension of the various policies that, cumulatively, were derived from the Plan's development process. This report illustrates that neither the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan nor our land acquisition programs emerged fully formed from the vision of any single individual or from a specific moment in time. Instead, they emerged from intense public debate, determination, hard work, political will, patience and an enlightened electorate. The Plan is organic, not static, and its overarching vision will continue to further this community's values.



I would like to thank the voters of Pima County who have funded these conservation efforts. They have in 1974, 1986, 1997, and again in 2004 approved a total of \$230 million in general obligation bonds for the purchase of critical, unique and sensitive lands. Without their approval these conservation efforts would not have been possible. This report highlights those efforts. With your help, we preserved the best of Pima County for future generations to enjoy.


Chuck Huckelberry
County Administrator