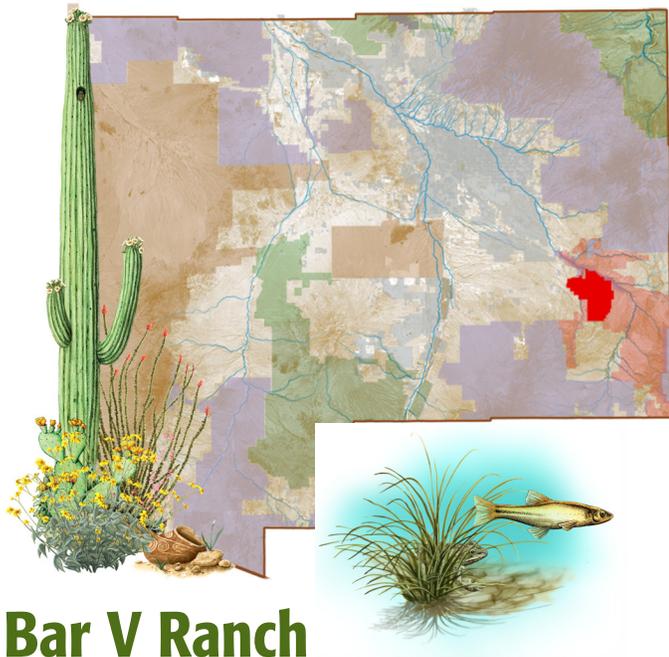


Cienega Valley-Empire Ranch Reserve



Bar V Ranch

Fee Lands: 1,763 acres
State Grazing Lease: 12,674 acres
Acquired: February 17, 2005
Cost: \$8,189,228
Fund: 2004 Bond Funds
Grant: Transportation Enhancement Fund

Background

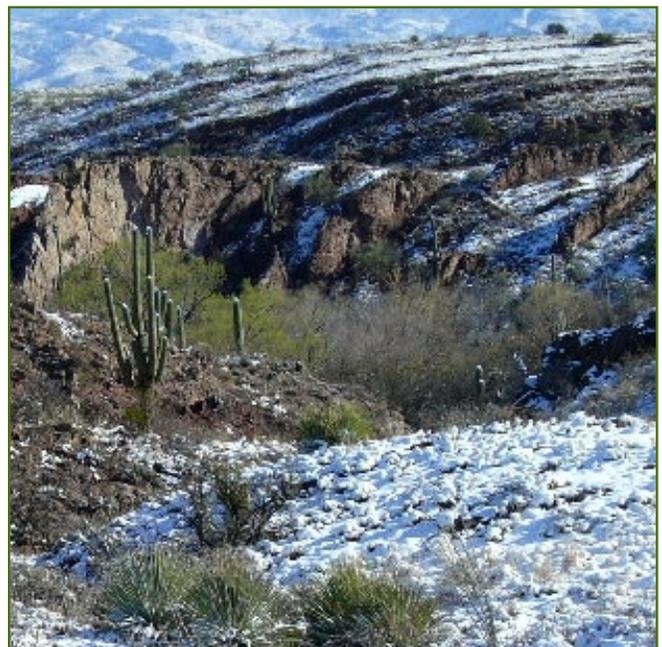
Pima County's acquisition of the Bar V Ranch contributes to the conservation of one of the most important wildlife movement corridors in the Cienega Valley. The 14,400 acre Bar V Ranch is located between the Rincon and Santa Rita Mountains, and adjacent to the County's Cienega Creek Natural Preserve. The ranch includes a significant portion of Davison Canyon, an important tributary and water source to Cienega Creek and the Tucson Basin. Acquisition of the Bar V Ranch preserves a large intact piece of the Empire-Cienega landscape and protects important riparian habitat crucial for several vulnerable species. In April 2004, the State Transportation Board unanimously approved funding of \$500,000 of the Scenic Easement/Acquisition Category towards the acquisition of the 600 acres of ranch fee land along Davison Canyon to preserve view sheds along state designated scenic roads and highways. In 2009, the National Board on Geographic Names approved a proposal by Pima County to name a key water source to the ranch, Beckys Spring, in honor of the daughter of the former owners who was instrumental in the ultimate conservation of the ranch.

Historic and Cultural Resources

The Bar V Ranch lands are located in the corridor following the Cienega Creek drainage that historically has been used for transportation linking the Santa Cruz River on the west with the San Pedro River Valley to the east. Historic trails known to have followed this corridor include the route taken by the Mormon Battalion between 1846 and 1847, the Butterfield Overland Mail Company stage stop on the Cienega Creek between 1858 and 1861, and the Wells Fargo Company pony express on portions of the Butterfield Trail. In 1880, the Southern Pacific Railroad laid their line following Cienega Creek, and in the 1920s, OS80 Highway was constructed following this corridor. Interstate 10 is the modern descendant of this earlier highway. Surveys by the University of Arizona revealed that human occupation along Cienega Creek is known between 6,000 B.C. to present day.

Biological Resources

Bar V Ranch includes a vital wildlife corridor linkage in the Cienega Valley, and is part of a critical landscape connection identified in the SDCP. The ranch is designated as Biological Core and Important Riparian Area within the Conservation Lands System, and supports habitat for at least 34 of the 55 Priority Vulnerable Species identified in the SDCP, including Lowland leopard frog, Bell's vireo, Abert's towhee and Needle-spined cactus. The ranch lands along Davidson Canyon contain reaches of perennial and intermittent stream flow, which supports populations of Longfin Dace. The shallow groundwater supports wetland and riparian vegetation, including the rare yew-leaved willow. This is also one the few places where one can see both the juniper and the saguaro cactus growing in close proximity.



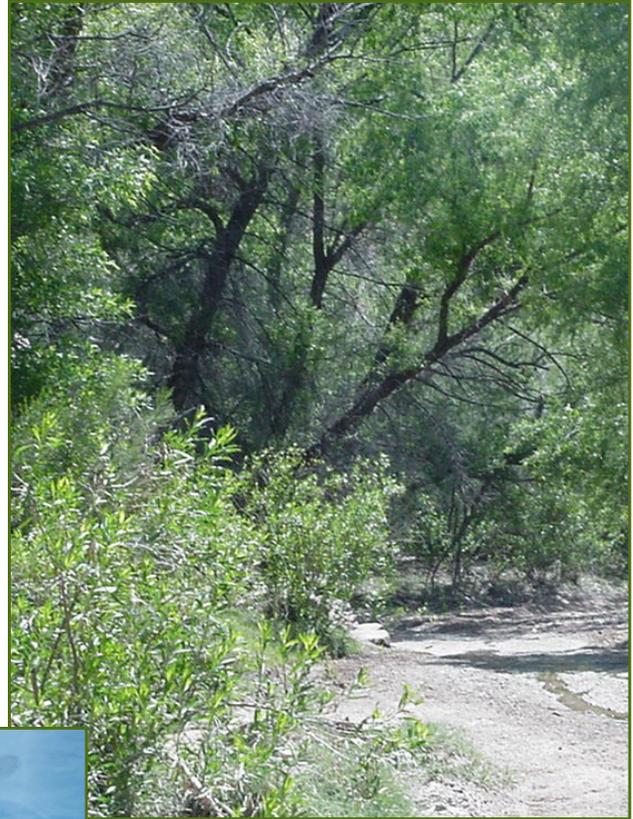
Davidson Canyon. Photo by John Sullivan

Management

Bar V Ranch is still maintained and operated as a working ranch. Limited grazing is still conducted on parts of the ranch and waters have been developed and are maintained year-round for livestock and wildlife. Range conditions are monitored annually and all activity on the ranch is managed to protect and sustain the ecological values. Most of the Davidson Canyon stretch of the perennial and intermittent flow owned by Pima County has been fenced to restrict livestock access and reduce unregulated recreational use impacts.

Recreation

Trails and roads along Davidson Canyon are a favorite with hikers, ATV riders and equestrian users. The nationally recognized Arizona Trail crosses Bar V Ranch along the Davidson Canyon drainage. Because the ranch is a mix of State Trust Lands and county-owned parcels, diverse recreational opportunities exist on the ranch. Responsible users follow County Park rules when on the County lands and Arizona State Land Department regulations for the Trust lands. The most significant recreational use impacts are due to irresponsible off-road vehicle use.



Above: Stretches of Davidson Canyon contain water year round, supporting Longfin Dace fish. Photo by Gloria Browne.



Left: View from Bar V Ranch of Interstate 10 bridge crossing Davidson Canyon. Photo by EPG, Inc.

Ongoing Property Improvements

Primary projects on the property to date have been related to site security and management enhancements:

- The stretch of Davidson Canyon was fenced to protect riparian habitats.
- Regulatory signage has been posted for recreational users.
- Permanent rangeland condition monitoring plots have been established.
- Surveys have been conducted to look where additional fencing can be placed on the ranch to improve livestock rotational use.
- Status of bat use in some abandoned mine shafts and natural caves have been conducted.
- Davidson Canyon is surveyed for flow patterns and the presence of native fish populations.

