

Northern Altar Valley Reserve



King 98 Ranch

Fee lands: 1,034 acres
State grazing lease: 3,096 acres
State agricultural lease: 410 acres
Cost: \$2,102,921
Acquired: March 18, 2005
Fund: 2004 Bond Funds

Background

The County purchased the 4,500-acre King 98 Ranch on March 18, 2005 with 2004 bond funds. The ranch is located southwest of Three Points, along the western side of Sasabe Highway, and includes two miles of Altar Wash. In addition to fee land and a State grazing and agricultural lease, the purchase included grandfathered irrigation water rights associated with 259 agricultural acres of currently fallow agricultural fields, a residential complex, barn, storage buildings and wells.

Historical and Cultural Resources

During the late 1800s, a number of homesteads were established in Altar Valley including the King ranches. The King 98 Ranch was in the King family for three generations, since the turn of the 20th century. The County purchased the property from several King family trusts controlled by Mrs. Louise King and her daughters. Mrs. King was an owner since she married into the King family in the 1940's. Today, the King 98 Ranch is adjacent to the King Anvil Ranch and it is representative of several family homesteads that remain in operation today in Altar Valley. These Altar Valley ranches provide an historic cultural landscape that is quickly disappearing in the West.

Although the property has not been surveyed for archaeological resources, it is expected that archaeological sites associated with Archaic, Hohokam, O'odham, and Anglo settlements would be found on the property similar to sites found elsewhere along the Altar Wash. The property is relatively close to the Hohokam settlements in the Coyote Mountains and would have provided riparian resources, as well as arable lands to the Hohokam.

Biological Resources

The property is entirely within the Conservation Lands System categories of Multiple Use, Special Species Management Area for the cactus ferruginous pygmy-owl, and contains portions of an Important Riparian Area. Although the ranch includes abandoned agricultural fields, significant water rights may provide for an opportunity to restore a stretch of the Altar and South Mendoza washes that traverse the property from south to north. The property supports habitat for the California leaf-nosed bat, Swainson's hawk, and Tumamoc globeberry. Portions of the property may provide habitat in the natural dispersal of young pygmy owls when found in the valley. Endangered Pima pineapple cacti have been found on the property.

Management

The ranch is currently managed primarily as open space. Limited grazing occurs on the ranch as part of the Ranch Management Agreement with the Kings Anvil Ranch owners. Caretakers from the Kings Anvil live in the residential compound to protect the site from vandalism. Vegetative monitoring transects have been established on the property to get range forage production and species diversity baseline information that is used in developing and guiding any annual grazing plans. The grazing leases associated with the property adjoin both the City of Tucson lands and Buckelew Farm property along Brawley Wash.



Landscape of King 98 Ranch - Photo by Robert Pape

Recreation

The area gets minimal recreational use. There are only limited roads into the area. Most of the ranch is State Trust lands and the appropriate recreational use permits from State Land are required. Most activity is walk in only. The area gets hikers, ATV riders, photographers, hunters and wildlife watchers.



Photo taken for monitoring purposes in August 2008 on King 98 Ranch
Photo by John Sullivan.



King 98 Ranch looking west towards Baboquivari Mountains - Photo by John Sullivan

Ongoing Property Improvements

- Most of the current activity at the ranch involves site monitoring or site protection.
- Several new fences have been constructed to better control livestock.
- Permanent monitoring sites have been identified and are surveyed twice annually.
- The ranch is being evaluated for possible restoration projects involving the former agriculture fields.
- The well system has been improved and new storage put in place.
- The County has worked with the group Humane Borders to place emergency water points away from the buildings to minimize vandalism from illegal border crossers.
- The ranch is part of an annual sportsman clean-up effort every year to address the litter and trash left behind by the illegal border crossers.

