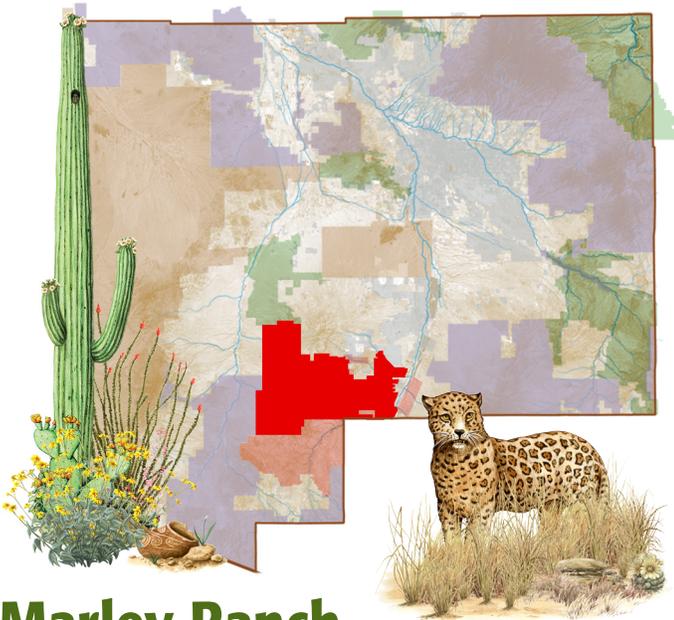


Upper Santa Cruz and Southern Altar Valley Reserve



Marley Ranch Conservation Area

Fee lands: 6,337 acres
Two options to acquire remainder of the 114,400 acre ranch
Cost: \$20,006,112
Acquired: April 30, 2009
Fund: 2004 Bond Funds

Total Proposed Conservation Area Size:
114,400 acres (24,000 acres in fee, 1,700-acre conservation easement, 85,900 State grazing lease, 2,800 BLM grazing permit)

Background

The Marley Ranch is located west and southwest of Green Valley, and at about 114,400 acres, is one of the largest working ranches remaining in Southern Arizona. The Ranch adjoins the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge, as well as the County's Rancho Seco, Sopori Ranch and Diamond Bell Ranch. After the great drought of the late 1800s, most small homesteads were consolidated into large ranches, and what is today the Marley Ranch was once part of the enormous Canoa Ranch holdings consolidated by Levi Manning in the early 1900s. Following the death of Howell Manning Jr. in 1951, much of the 500,000-acre Canoa ranch was divided and sold off. That portion sold to Kemper Marley in the mid-1950s became known as the Marley Ranch and still operates as one of the largest ranches in Pima County.

The owners of the Marley Ranch approached the County to acquire the ranch as a conservation area in phases. The County's initial purchase included the more biologically sensitive parcels totaling 6,337 acres of fee lands straddling the foothills of the Sierrita Mountains and the north flank of the Cerro Colorado Mountains, and options to conserve the remainder of the Ranch by the end of 2014.

Historical and Cultural Resources

Historically this region has been a principal focal point for Native American and Spanish settlement. It is thought that this land has been occupied throughout the past 10,000 years. Prehistoric rock shelters, pictographs, petroglyph sites and village sites (likely Hohokam) are reported to exist on Marley Ranch. Evidence of early Spanish Missionary settlements may also exist. Some portions of the Ranch were originally settled by early homesteaders. Prominent Historic period ranches still exist on the Marley Ranch property including the Batamote Ranch (Antonio Q. de Elias). Along the road to Batamote Ranch, ruins of an adobe house and a well still stand. Just east of these ruins are the historic ranching features of Baños.

Biological Resources

The Ranch's topographical diversity and significant size supports a variety of plants and animals. The Ranch acts as a significant crossroads for movement of native wildlife species between ecologically important mountain systems in southern Arizona. The Ranch is known to support endangered species, such as the Pima Pineapple Cactus, as well as over half of the County-identified Priority Vulnerable Species. The Ranch was also part of the home range of one of the few known jaguars in the United States for over a decade. In addition, drainage into the Altar/Brawley Wash and the Santa Cruz River off of the slopes of the Cerro Colorado and Sierrita Mountains, portions of which are within the Ranch, plays an important role in aquifer recharge for Tucson and the Green Valley/Sahuarita area. Priority Vulnerable Species include Lesser long-nosed bat, Desert box turtle, Pima Pineapple Cactus, and Ground snake.



Portion of Cerro Colorados found on Marley Ranch - Photo by EPG

Management

The Marley Ranch is still operated as a working cattle ranch. The ranch contains private lands, State grazing leases and Bureau of Land Management grazing leases. Under the Ranch Management Agreement established with the Phase I acquisitions, the current ranch owners still have primary control of the grazing leases and ranch management activities until the County completes the final acquisition phases. There are however restrictions similar in all other Ranch Management Agreements on the new County owned fee lands acquired in the initial acquisition to protect ecological values.

Recreation

Because of its vast size and mix of private and public lands, the Marley Ranch complex provides numerous recreational opportunities. Common activities include hiking, mountain biking, wildlife viewing, recreational rock hounding, hunting, nature photography and primitive camping. The ranch has a network of rugged, poorly marked and unmaintained roads that require high clearance or 4WD vehicles. Visitors should be prepared for semi-wilderness conditions with little chance of assistance if they break down or become lost.



Remnants of adobe structure - Photo by Linda



Looking south towards Cerro Colorado - Photo by

Ongoing Property Improvements

- Because portions of the ranch are still being acquired, management activities are more oriented around learning and mapping the ranch infrastructure and ecological units.
- Basic vegetative plots will be established on the County owned lands to monitor livestock use and establish baseline vegetative transect species composition and diversity.
- Numerous water sources are being considered for upgrade to solar and availability for native wildlife on a year-round basis.
- The area is being considered for future habitat projects to enhance the viability of the pronghorn antelope herd that still exists in the valley.

