

Pima County's Pima Pineapple Cactus Mitigation Bank



Madera Highlands Sub Unit, looking southeast toward Cerro Colorado Mountains. Photo by Vanessa Bechtol, ALWT

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Fee Lands: 529 acres
Acquired: August 2005 and July 2006
Cost: \$498,423
Fund: 2004 Bond Funds and a land exchange
Partner: Arizona Land and Water Trust

Overview

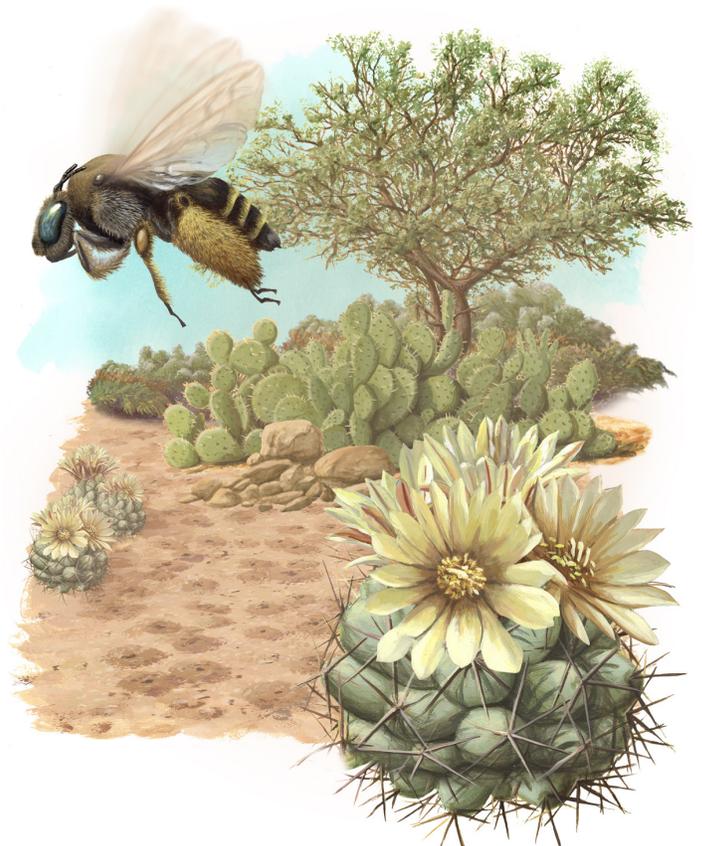
The Pima pineapple cactus was recommended by the Smithsonian Institute in 1975 to be federally listed as a threatened species. But it was not until 1993 that the plant was listed and by then it was listed as an endangered species. Based on known locations of the cactus in Pima County, modeled habitat for likely locations, and land ownership patterns, the majority of cacti not yet conserved are located on State Trust land. The challenges with conserving State Trust land have made it difficult to conserve significant stands of this cactus. That said, Pima County is committed to conserving this cactus, and our land acquisition efforts to this end have included ranch conservation and mitigation banking. The Diamond Bell and Marley Ranches are two County-owned ranches that include land owned by Pima County that contains the cactus, and State Trust land leased by Pima County that contains the cactus.

In addition, the County has established an official mitigation bank with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service specifically for Pima pineapple cactus. The bank is made up of two sub units; one on a property known as Madera Highlands, located in Altar

Valley on the northern end of the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge, and another on several properties near Elephant Head, between the Santa Rita Mountains and Canoa Ranch. When the County disturbs habitat for this cactus by building roads and other public facilities, the County is able to use credits from this mitigation bank to offset those impacts. The County provides regular reports to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on how many credits were used from the bank and monitoring information on the health of the individual cacti in the bank.

Threats

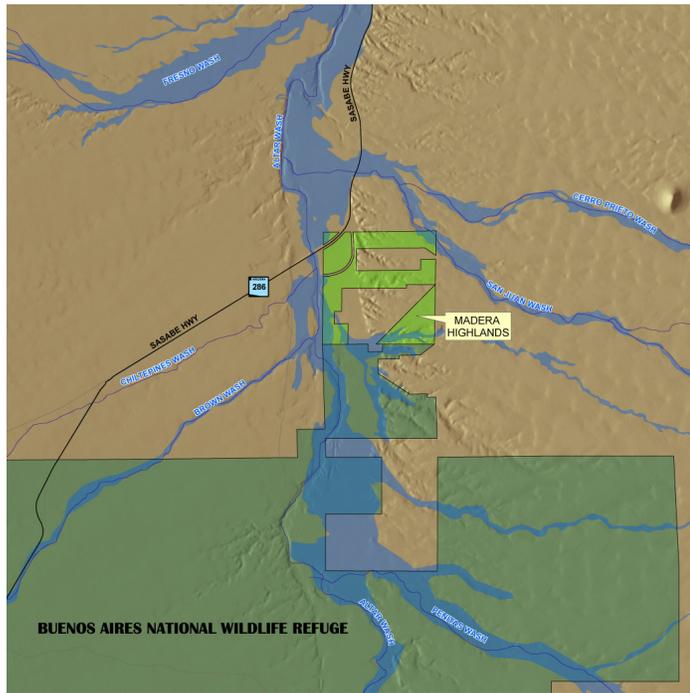
Loss, fragmentation, alteration of habitat from residential development and mining are the primary threats to Pima pineapple cactus. The County is aware of a proposed mining project west of Green Valley that would destroy thousands of acres of cactus habitat. In addition, two residential developers acquired significant acreage south of Madera Canyon around the same time the County acquired the properties near Elephant Head. Other threats include unrestricted recreational off-highway vehicle use, increased proliferation of roads and trails, natural and prescribed fire, general land disturbances and illegal collection of the cactus for trade.



The Pima pineapple cactus is a round cactus measuring 4 to 18 inches wide, with yellow flowers during summer monsoons. The cactus depends on a particular ground nesting bee for pollination. Illustration by Bill Singleton.

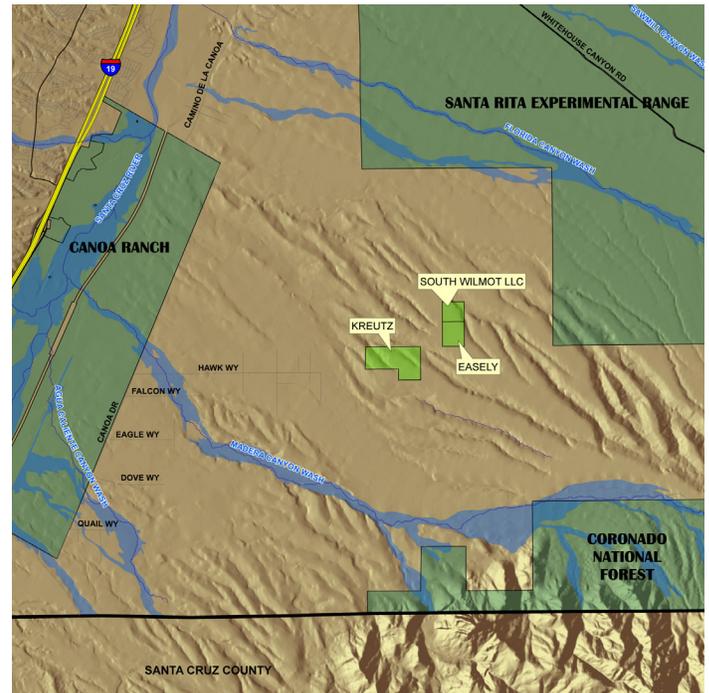
Madera Highlands Sub-Unit

The County purchased the 366-acre Madera Highlands property on August 12, 2005 for \$385,733, funded with 2004 bond funds. The property is within the Biological Core and Multiple Use management areas of the Conservation Lands System, with Important Riparian areas crossing the property. An archaeological site was found on the western edge of the property containing ceramic, flaked stone and ground stone artifacts associated with Hohokam use of the area.



Elephant Head Sub-Unit – South Wilmot LLC

The County purchased the 36-acre South Wilmot LLC property on July 25, 2006 for \$112,690, funded with 2004 bond funds. This property is directly adjacent to the Elephant Head sub-unit of the County’s Pima Pineapple Cactus Mitigation Bank and managed as part of the overall Pima Pineapple Cactus Mitigation bank established with the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The property is entirely within the Biological Core Management Area of the County’s Conservation Lands System.



In 1997 and 2004, voters in Pima County approved funds for the construction of the Green Valley Performing Arts Center. The center was constructed on land that included Pima pineapple cactus habitat. In order to construct the center, credits were used from the County’s Pima pineapple cactus mitigation bank.