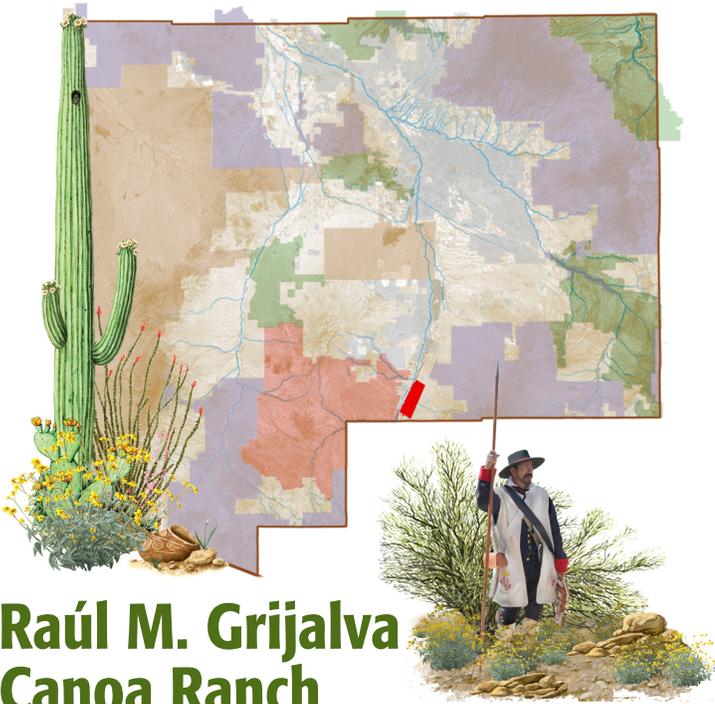


## Upper Santa Cruz and Southern Altar Valley Reserve



# Raúl M. Grijalva Canoa Ranch Conservation Park

**Fee land: 4,800 Acres**  
**Acquired: 2001, 2005 and 2006**  
**Cost: \$10,800,000**  
**Fund: 1997 and 2004 Bond Funds, Flood Control District Funds**

### Background

Named for former County Supervisor and now Arizona Congressman Raúl M. Grijalva, who was born and raised at Canoa Ranch and championed its preservation, Canoa Ranch is a 4,800-acre property located south of Green Valley. Situated on either side of the Santa Cruz River, the former ranching property was saved from development through its acquisition using Pima County bond funds in 2001 and subsequent acquisition of 135 acres in 2005. Plans are in place to make parts of the ranch publicly accessible.

### History

Canoa Ranch is sited on what was, for thousands of years, an area of nearly continuous occupation by Native Americans, and served as a corridor for travel for Native peoples and European explorers. During the 1690s, Father Kino passed by the Canoa site on his way northward to the O'odham villages of Bac and Tucson where he established missionary outposts. In 1775, de Anza camped at what was then known as La Canoa on his way to find a presidio and settlement at present day San Francisco (California).

In 1821, areas of land that include the existing Canoa Ranch property were issued by the Spanish as a Land Grant to the Ortiz brothers. This transaction was compromised by Mexico's subsequent independence from Spain, followed by the Gadsden Purchase of 1854. As a United States Territory, a succession of ranching operations used the Canoa site.

By 1914, Levi Manning had acquired the Canoa property, and the Manning family continued to own, develop, and raise cattle at Canoa Ranch through the 1960s. There followed a period of corporate ownership during which the condition of the property steadily declined. With the property under threat from development for housing, Pima County purchased portions of Canoa Ranch to preserve the remaining 4,800 acres which included the Ranch Headquarters buildings.

Recognition of the importance of Canoa Ranch occurred on May 30, 2007, when it was listed in the National Register of Historic Places as the Canoa Ranch Headquarters Historic District.

### Biological Resources

Canoa Ranch has been identified for its importance as a natural landmark, and for its significant riparian areas of both scenic and historic value. Located along over five miles of the Santa Cruz River channel, the property has both flood plain habitats and mixed cacti desert grassland uplands. The property is still an important wildlife corridor allowing movement from developing areas to the west of the property along I-19 into the river corridor or on to the Santa Rita Mountains to the east. The ranch still has resident mule deer, javelina, bobcats, coyotes and over 100 species of resident or migratory birds. Efforts are well underway for re-introduction of a Burrowing owl colony at this site.

### Built Environment

A large number of buildings exist at Canoa, most being located within the headquarters area. The majority were constructed from adobe bricks covered in plaster, and represent a unique collection of residential and working structures dating from the early 20th century and representative of large ranch components in southern Arizona and northern Sonora, Mexico. In addition to buildings there are numerous outbuildings and "rataque" (meaning stacked wood) fences made from Mesquite, that form an intricate and extensive system of corrals thought to be the best preserved in Southern Arizona.



*Historic Canoa Ranch*

## Master Plan

In a lengthy public process that included numerous presentations and requests for input, the Canoa Ranch Master Plan was approved by Pima County in 2007. It is this guiding document that is currently being used to guide conservation, repair, and rehabilitation efforts. The long-term goal of the Master Plan is to provide the public with a multi-level experience that will include some access to the sensitive natural areas of the ranch, and museum experiences ranging from a new visitors' center, to rehabilitated buildings. The approach pivots around balancing the integration of Canoa's natural ecosystems with the historic ranch – to include sustainable farming and ranching practices. The center of Canoa Ranch will be the ranch headquarters.

## Recreation

Five miles of the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail traverse the Canoa Ranch and provide the public with an authentic experience of following the 1775 route of the Anza expedition. The public may hike or ride their horses along the west side of the Santa Cruz River, with a staging and parking area at Elephant Head Road.



Top – Headquarters buildings under repair.  
Bottom – Headquarters buildings rehabilitated.  
Photos by Simon Herbert



Historic Canoa Ranch

## Ongoing Property Improvements

- Monitoring and maintenance of the Anza Trail passing through the Park.
- The headquarters buildings, including residences, bunkhouses, barns, corrals and outbuildings are being historically restored to ensure their long-term preservation and future enjoyment by the public.
- Ongoing well and water system upgrades.
- Heritage education programs will be developed and planned that include heritage breed livestock and planted areas.
- Working on developing ranch demonstrations and living history opportunities.
- Ongoing restoration of the historic canal, pond and riparian areas continue.
- Developing and enhancing birding, picnicking, hiking and guided horseback riding opportunities.

