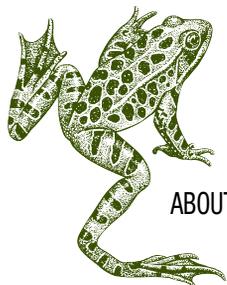


Sonoran News



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INFORMATION YOU SHOULD KNOW
ABOUT THE SONORAN DESERT CONSERVATION
AND COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

SONORAN DESERT CONSERVATION AND COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

by Chuck Huckelberry, Pima County Administrator

Great communities are no accident. They are born out of natural strength and beauty and have a deep respect for history, culture and diversity. They are inspired by the vision of residents drawn to them. They are brought to maturity through hard work and investment. And they survive because of compromise and consensus. In a sense they achieve balance. Such balance is at the heart of the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan. I would like to take a few moments to describe the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan to you.

Origins of the Plan

There is little question that in order to succeed as a community we will have to begin to talk about growth and conservation issues in a more rational and comprehensive manner. The rhetoric and angry words of past debates have lost their meaning and have accomplished little.

In 1998 the Pima County Board of Supervisors initiated discussions on land use planning and conservation, but redirected the battle-weary vocabulary of the growth debate to include biological and scientific language and concepts.

This was a bold stroke by the Board — to undertake science-based planning, and depart from the past methods of placing political considerations at the front of land use decision making.

The Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan uses a concept in regional planning that has been called bio-planning or natural resource assess-

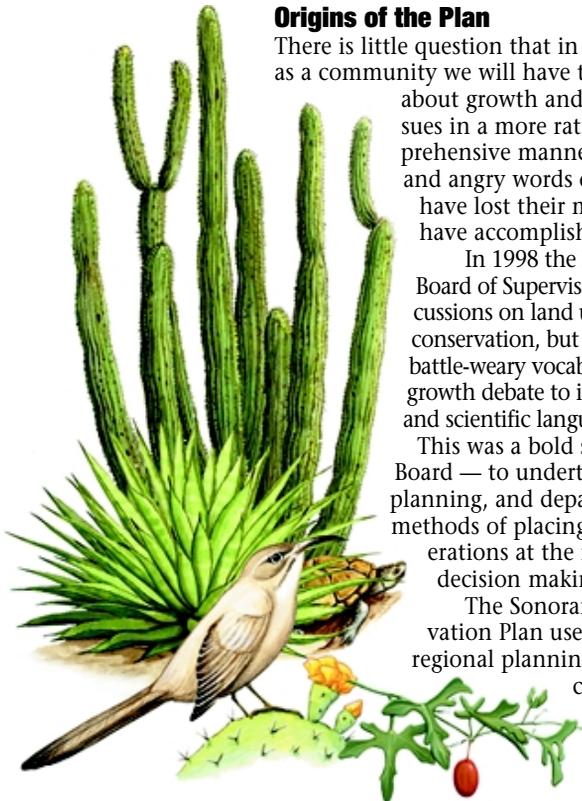
ment and evaluation. Such is a necessary first step in defining where best to grow. This method of planning assumes that all communities are endowed with natural, cultural and historical resources that should be protected from or even be excluded from development. This is the guiding principal of the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan.

Pima County Will Continue to Grow — Plan for it Sensibly

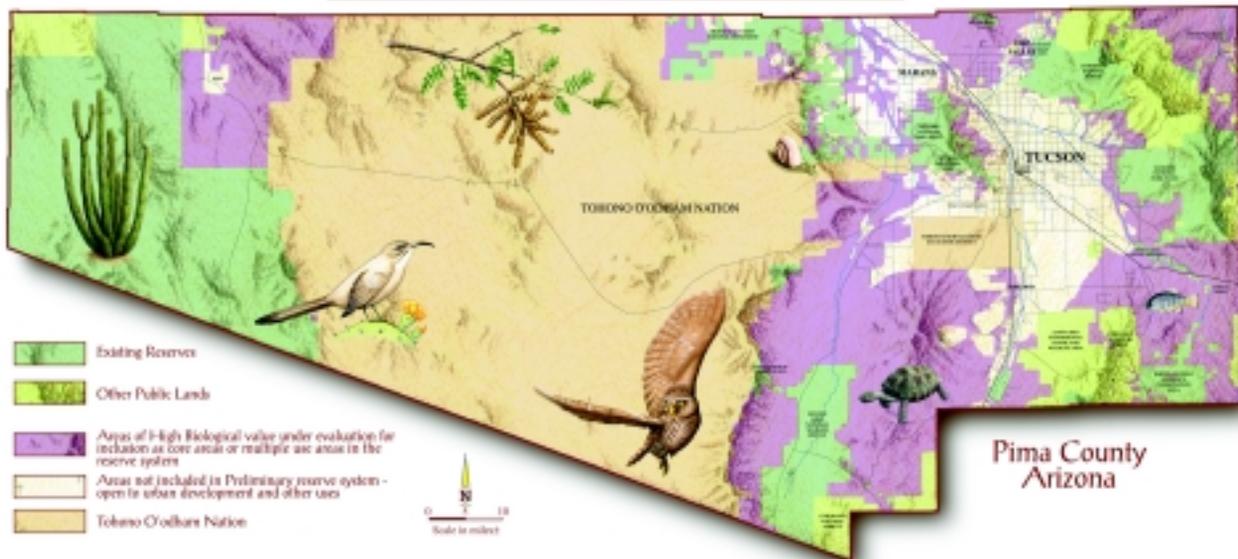
For the last several decades Arizona has been one of the fastest growing states in the country. In the decade from 1990 to 2000 the population in Arizona increased by 40 percent. Pima County has undergone similar rapid population expansion. It has been estimated that each year new construction consumes approximately ten square miles of Sonoran Desert. The Sonoran Desert, rich in biodiversity, has been identified by The Nature Conservancy as one of the top ecoregions worldwide, deserving of special conservation attention.

The need for conservation planning arises from the collision between rapid population growth and resource protection. The Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan, mindful of the factual correlation between growth and the consumption of natural resources, places emphasis and gives high priority to preserving and protecting our most important natural resources. Growth should be directed to areas with the least natural, historic and cultural resource values. The conservation plan is not about whether the County continues to grow, it is about where the County grows.

Make no mistake — we will continue to grow. The challenge for the conservation plan is how to direct growth and protect the lifestyle and quality of life that makes Pima County a unique and great place to live.



Preliminary Conceptual Biologically-based Reserve System Including Core Areas and Multiple Use Areas



The Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan Elements

Most urban areas have plans or programs that protect to some extent natural, historical and cultural resources. Pima County was no exception prior to the present Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan. What is different under the conservation plan is that all of these natural resource planning and protection activities have been integrated into one plan. The elements of the plan are:

Ranch Conservation

Ranching is a significant historical and cultural land use in Pima County and has served to preserve natural open space as well as to protect natural resources. Today, many of these ranches are threatened. By helping ranchers stay in ranching and by promoting conservation ranching principals, natural resources as well as the open space of Pima County will be better protected.

Riparian Restoration

It is not difficult to understand that riparian areas in a desert environment are important natural resources. Sixty to seventy-five percent of all species in Arizona rely on a riparian environment at some point during their life cycle. Our rivers and streams need protection as well as restoration.

Mountain Parks

Protecting the open and scenic beauty of the West has long been recognized as important. Tucson Mountain Park was first established by the Board of Supervisors in 1929 and has been expanded ever since. Preservation of these vast tracts of mountain lands will protect both our scenic views and the heritage of the wide open West.

Historical and Cultural Preservation

Pima County is rich in history, culture, regional character and diversity. The foundation for the future is how well we preserve the past. It is important that we preserve the past in order to learn for the future.

Critical Habitat and Biological Corridors

When the conservation plan was initiated, the scientific community had little data collected about the interaction of the development and the decline of biodiversity. Three years later, a scientific basis has been established that exceeds the precision of other national conservation plans, and represents the start of long-term investment in research, monitoring and adaptive management. In addition, critical habitat designations identify unique Sonoran Desert habitat associations, not previously recognized, as promoting sustained Sonoran Desert bio-diversity. While the flower of the protected saguaro cactus is the state flower, science has proven that the unprotected ironwood tree is really the tree of life for the Sonoran Desert.

Each of these independent planning elements are being integrated and woven into the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan to provide the best scientifically defensible and most comprehensive set of natural resource, historical and cultural preservation goals. Combined, these elements form a powerful argument for positive conservation actions today.

Get Involved and Stay Involved

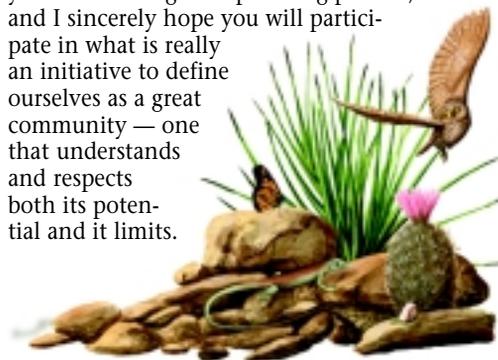
The Board fully recognizes that the success of any plan, including the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan, requires the support and approval of the people of Pima County. Today, a number of involved citizens participate in the plan. A steering committee of well over one hundred individuals and technical teams involving as many people have spent countless hours of effort on the plan to date. They will spend many more. The Board and I thank them for their tremendous contributions.

The Tohono O'odham Nation deserves special recognition as the first governmental body to join the planning process. We have learned a great deal from their respect of heritage, culture and natural resources.

You too can become involved. This is an open planning process where everyone can participate. All voices are equally important and the Board and I invite you to participate. The final plan will be one of compromise and consensus, hammered out by the hard work of involved and knowledgeable participants.

Finally

The Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan is an innovative and far reaching blueprint for growing in an intelligent and graceful manner in Pima County. The conservation plan is designed to benefit the natural systems and residents of Pima County. When fully implemented, the proposed plan will define where we should grow, and where it is best not to grow. Urban sprawl will finally be contained. And we will have saved our best lands and most precious resources for future generations to enjoy. The Pima County Board of Supervisors invites you into this regional planning process, and I sincerely hope you will participate in what is really an initiative to define ourselves as a great community — one that understands and respects both its potential and its limits.



Visit the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan Web site at www.SDCPonline.org.



Sonoran News is produced by Pima County Graphic Services. To get more information about the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan, call 740-8162 or write to:

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The Board of Supervisors welcomes your written comments.