

Critical Landscape Linkages

Another key component in the success of the established reserve is promoting the integrity of connectivity through restoring and maintaining critical landscape linkages. The Regional Transportation Authority's proposed regional improvement plan, which is scheduled to go to voters on May 16, 2006, includes a Critical Landscape Linkages category. Local governments in this region have invested significantly in protecting natural areas. At the same time, there is a serious need for transportation infrastructure improvements to meet current demands and to accommodate the growth projected in the next twenty years. Investment in conservation and transportation should not be mutually exclusive. While the RTA Plan does not conflict with Pima County's biologically sensitive areas, many



existing roads and highways do. In fact they act as barriers to wildlife movement, isolate parks, preserves, and other open space. In response, the RTA Board approved \$45 million for retrofitting wildlife crossing structures in existing roadways or providing incentives for governments to integrate wildlife crossing structures into future roadways already under design. Through these efforts, the Regional Transportation Authority can lead the way for not only the most expansive twenty-year

plan, proposed to fund the most important regional transportation improvements for the region, but also for integrating environmentally sensitive roadway design into transportation planning. For more information on the RTA plan, please visit www.RTAmobility.com.

Where We Are Today

With the maximum reserve design boundaries established through our 2001 Conservation Lands System, and the successful passage of the 2004 bond initiative, Pima County has both a local plan in place and funding for the first phase of a federal Section 10 endangered species permit. The latest draft of the federal permit, the Pima County Multi-species Conservation Plan, was completed in December 2005 and is available for public comment. A

revised plan that incorporates both public comment and a workplan for carrying out the MSCP will be issued this year with the Environmental Impact Statement. The Section 10 permit that we will finalize in 2006 will create long-term economic stability as we grow in a way that reflects our traditions and adds to our quality of life.

If you would like to get involved or learn more about the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan, please call 520-740-8800, and visit our website at www.SDCPonline.org.



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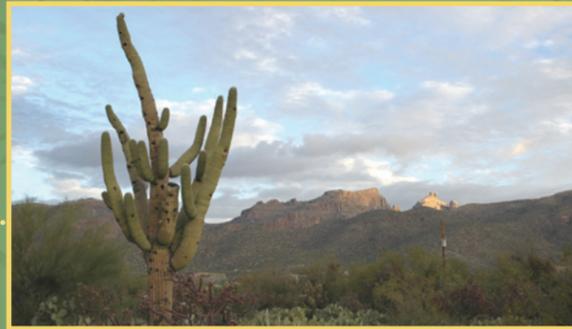
SONORAN DESERT CONSERVATION PLAN

A Glance at Where We Are Today



The SDCP

The Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan (SDCP) was developed using science-based principles shaped by public review and discussion, resulting in a plan that reflects community values and the uniqueness of our region.



Background

Pima County spans more than 9,000 square miles and is at the crossroads for two eco-regions – the Apache Highlands, which create the mountainous sky islands, and the Sonoran Desert, which stretches west from Tucson across the Colorado River into California and south into Mexico. Considered the hottest of North American deserts, the Sonoran Desert is also the most biologically diverse, with bi-annual rainfall and mild winters. The County is also rich in cultural and historic resources, with some archeological sites dating back thousands of years.

Since the 1950s, Pima County has experienced rapid population growth, averaging more than 15,000 new residents per year. In recent times, this has translated to around 10 square miles of land consumed each year by development.

Direct and cumulative impacts have taken a toll on resources. In 1997, the County experienced an endangered species listing that conflicted with economic development, when the declining population status of the tiny Cactus Ferruginous Pygmy-owl was brought to

the community's attention. In response, the Pima County Board of Supervisors initiated what has come to be one of the nation's most comprehensive conservation and urban planning efforts, known as the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan.

This regional planning approach looked to combine short-term actions and long-range planning to protect and enhance the natural and cultural environment. Planning efforts focused on six elements: Habitat, Corridors, Cultural Resources, Mountain Parks, Ranch Conservation, and Riparian Protection.

After extensive public and expert participation that began in 1998, the plan adopted in 2001 reflected the goals of both the scientists and the community of diverse interest groups. The 2001 Comprehensive Land Use Plan Update combines the best of urban and bio-planning, with a reserve designed to protect the desert's biological heritage, and an urban area designed to improve quality of life for residents and ensure the long-term sustainability of the tax base.

Spanning a multi-million acre planning area, the award-winning Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan and the Comprehensive Land Use Plan represent the most advanced and innovative uses of urban and bio-planning, fiscal resource mapping, and cultural resource identification.



Cerro Colorado Reserve

Pima County's acquisitions of the 4,800-acre Canoa Ranch in 2001 and the 9,754-acre Rancho Seco in 2005 create anchors that are key to the conservation of the upper Arivaca and Santa Cruz area.

Northern Altar Valley Reserve

Totaling more than 2,000 acres, the acquisitions of the Buckalew Ranch in 2002, and the Old Hayhook Ranch and the King 98 Ranch in 2005, contribute significantly to defining the urban edge and conserving the Altar Valley watershed.

Cienega Valley Reserve

In 1986, Pima County began preserving lands now known as the Cienega Creek Natural Preserve, followed by acquisitions in Colossal Cave Mountain Park. In 2004, Pima County acquired the 155-acre Baker property, which links Colossal Cave Mountain Park to the Cienega Preserve. Adjoining the Cienega Preserve along Davidson Canyon is the 1,700-acre Bar V Ranch, which was acquired in 2005.

Through a land exchange, Pima County has been able to preserve the 1,700-acre McKenzie property, which lies east of the Cienega Preserve, between Colossal Cave Mountain Park and the county-owned 470-acre Walden Ranch.

San Pedro Valley Reserve

In an effort to protect a spring-fed wetland and extensive bosques in the San Pedro Valley, Pima County established the Bingham Cienega Natural Preserve in 1989. In September 2004, Pima County acquired 6,829 acres of private land within the A-7 Ranch. County-held grazing leases bring the total acreage of land to over 41,100 acres.

Ironwood Forest National Monument

Pima County initiated the process that created the 129,000-acre Ironwood Forest National Monument in June 2000. Since then, Pima County acquired a 640-acre in-holding known as Lords Ranch.



Awards

The Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan has been the receipt of numerous state, regional, national, and international awards.



- STATE / LOCAL**
- 2004 Tucson Pima County Historical Commission Historic Preservation Certificate Award
 - 2003 Arizona Landscape Architects Award of Merit for the Conservation Lands System
 - 2003 Arizona Parks and Recreation Association Award, Outstanding After School Program, Sonoran Desert Kids
 - 2002 Arizona Planning Association, *Public Education Award, SDCP Study Series*
 - 2002 Arizona Historic Preservation Plan Award
 - 2002 Arizona Parks and Recreation Association Award, Outstanding Program, SDCP Kids Environmental Education
 - 2001 Arizona Planning Association, Best Plan, Multi-Agency Coordination
 - 2001 *Victor R. Stoner Award* Arizona Archaeological & Historical Society
 - 2001 Arizona Planning Association, Distinguished Leadership
 - 2000 Arizona Planning Association, Public Education
 - 2000 Arizona Heritage Preservation Honor Award

- REGIONAL**
- 2003 Recovery Land Acquisition Grant Award
 - 2002 Ahwahnee Award of Honor, Local Government Commission Planning Award for Regional Initiative
 - 2002 Recovery Land Acquisition Grant Award
 - 2001 Southwest Arc/Info Users Group Map Poster Contest - 3rd Place Awarded to SDCP Priority Species Habitat Distribution Modeling
- NATIONAL**
- 2005 National Association of Counties, County Leadership Conservation Award
 - 2004 Society of American Archaeology Award for Excellence in Cultural Resources Management
 - 2002 American Planning Association, Outstanding Planning Award for a Plan
 - 2002 National Trust for Historic Preservation Award for poster theme, Preserving the Spirit of Place
 - 1999 National Park Service Award for Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail
 - 1998 National Trust for Historic Preservation National Honor Award, presented to Patronato San Xavier

- INTERNATIONAL**
- 2001 ESRI User Conference, Best Instructional Presentation - 3rd Place, Awarded to "A GIS-Based Approach to Reserve Design"
 - 2000 ESRI User Conference, Best Instructional Presentation - 1st Place Awarded to "GIS and Habitat Conservation Planning in Pima County"



Our Plan

Unique in its approach, Pima County's plan is structured to reflect the natural system through large working landscape reserves, as opposed to the more traditional species-specific level approach which usually sets aside small and isolated refuges. Ranch conservation is also an integral part of the overall approach. Through their conservation, the metropolitan urban boundary is better defined, a vastly larger landscape can be protected, and the heritage and culture of the West is preserved. The conservation of these large working landscapes, including our parks, preserves and riparian restoration areas will extend protection to not only endangered and vulnerable species, but also to an extensive range of native species on an eco-system level.

For decades, Pima County has been acquiring and conserving important ranch lands, mountain parks, and riparian areas. Partnerships with agencies like the Bureau of Land Management have led to projects such as the establishment of the Las Cienegas National Conservation Area and the Ironwood

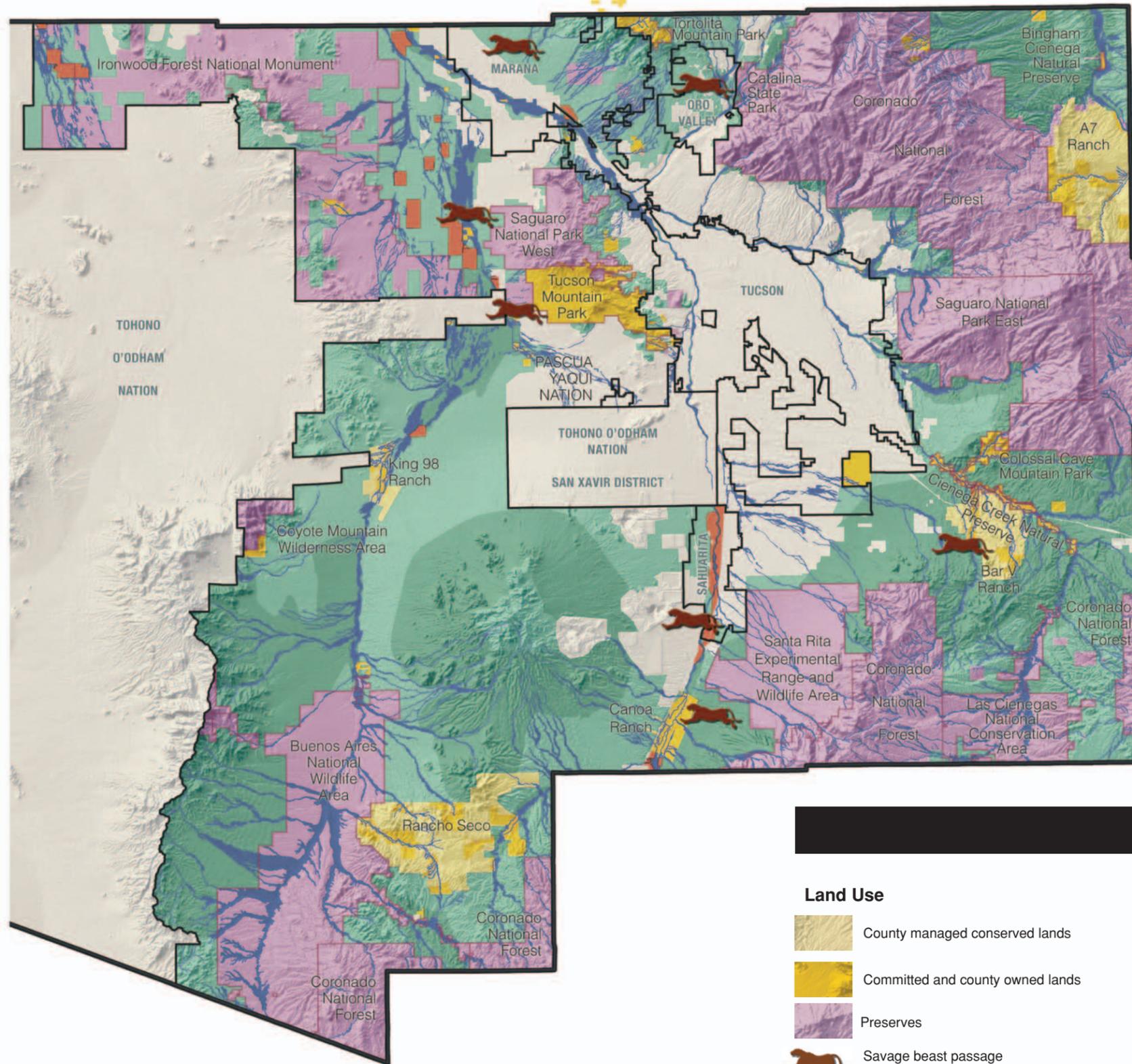
Forest National Monument. These acquisitions and partnerships result in the emerging reserve framework.

In 2004, voters approved a \$174.3 million bond program for acquisition of open space in support of the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan. Through past actions and acquisitions to date, Pima County has built a reserve totaling approximately 77,000 acres, of which 21,400 acres have been acquired with \$51.3 million of the recent 2004 open space bond monies, at a cost of \$2,400 per acre. An anchor for the reserve has been created in each important watershed of Eastern Pima County, which is comprised of 5 large reserve areas known as the Cerro Colorado, Northern Altar Valley, Cienega Valley, and San Pedro Valley Reserves, and the Ironwood Forest National Monument.

Since its formation in 2004 to oversee the Implementation of the Open Space Bond Program, the Conservation Acquisition Commission has worked steadily towards achieving the goals of the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan.



RESERVES IN EASTERN PIMA COUNTY



EXISTING PIMA COUNTY RESERVES AND PARKS

Parks/Reserves	Acres
A-7 Ranch.....	6,889
Arivaca Open Space.....	124
Arthur Pack Regional Park.....	503
Bar-V Ranch.....	1,763
Bingham Cienega Natural Preserve.....	303
Buckalew Ranch.....	498
Canoa Ranch.....	4,884
Carpenter Ranch.....	560
Cienega Creek Natural Preserve.....	4,201
Colossal Cave Mountain Park.....	2,295
Empirita Ranch.....	360
King 98 Ranch.....	1,034
La Milagrosa/Agua Caliente.....	24
Lords Ranch.....	639
Los Morteros.....	223
Madera Highlands Open Space.....	366
Old Hayhook Ranch.....	838
Oracle Ridge Open Space.....	1,214
Pima County Parklands Foundation.....	316
Posta Quemada Ranch.....	469
Rancho Seco.....	9,574
Southeast Regional Park.....	3,004
Sweetwater Preserve.....	695
Tortolita Mountain Park.....	3,124
Tucson Mountain Park.....	19,544
Walden Ranch.....	470
West Branch of the Santa Cruz.....	74
36th Street Corridor.....	152
Other Pima County Open Space and Flood Control District Parcels.....	12,791
Total	77,071

LEGEND

Land Use

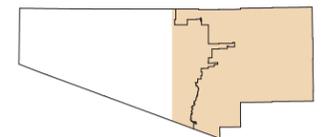
-  County managed conserved lands
-  Committed and county owned lands
-  Preserves
-  Savage beast passage
-  Administrative boundaries
-  Pima County boundaries

Conservation Lands System

-  Important riparian areas
-  Biological core and Multiple use management areas
-  Agriculture inholdings within the Comprehensive Landuse System
-  Areas outside the Comprehensive Landuse System



Pima County Index Map



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