

Legend

- USGS Gauge
- Spring
- Stream
- ★ Rain/Stream Flow Gauge (PCRFC)
- ★ Precipitation Gauge (PCRFC)
- ▲ Weather Station (PCRFC)

Feasibility Studies Along the Santa Cruz River

January 2006

Purpose

Critical riparian and cienega habitats have been lost in the region due to water resource changes in Pima County. Congress authorized the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to evaluate environmental restoration potentials along the Santa Cruz River, from the north boundary of the Tohono O'odham Reservation, north to Sanders Road, in Marana. The USACE has divided this evaluation of the river into three separate feasibility studies:

- **Paseo de las Iglesias Feasibility Study**, consisting of a 7.5-mile reach of the Santa Cruz River and adjacent lands, totaling 5,005 acres, extending from the northern boundary of the Tohono O'odham Reservation to Congress Street;
- **El Rio Medio Feasibility Study**, covering approximately 2,675 acres (about 4.1 square miles) of land, between Congress Street and Prince Road;
- **Tres Rios del Norte Feasibility Study**; an approximately 18-mile stretch along the Santa Cruz River from Prince Road to Sanders Road, in the City of Tucson, unincorporated Pima County and the Town of Marana, covers an area of about 19,800 acres.

The purpose of these studies is to investigate the feasibility of ecosystem restoration along the Santa Cruz River. Related issues will also be reviewed, including potential recreational improvements, cultural resource preservation, groundwater recharge and recovery. The aim is to return the Santa Cruz River to an aesthetically pleasing, wildlife-friendly corridor, and create a variety of recreation opportunities.

Study Participants

The three Feasibility Studies are being prepared by the USACE, in cooperation with Pima County Regional Flood Control District, the City of Tucson and/or the Town of Marana, the non-federal sponsors. Coordination will also be conducted with the Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Arizona Game & Fish Department, the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, the State Historic Preservation Office, Native American Tribes, the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension, local Neighborhood Associations, and others.

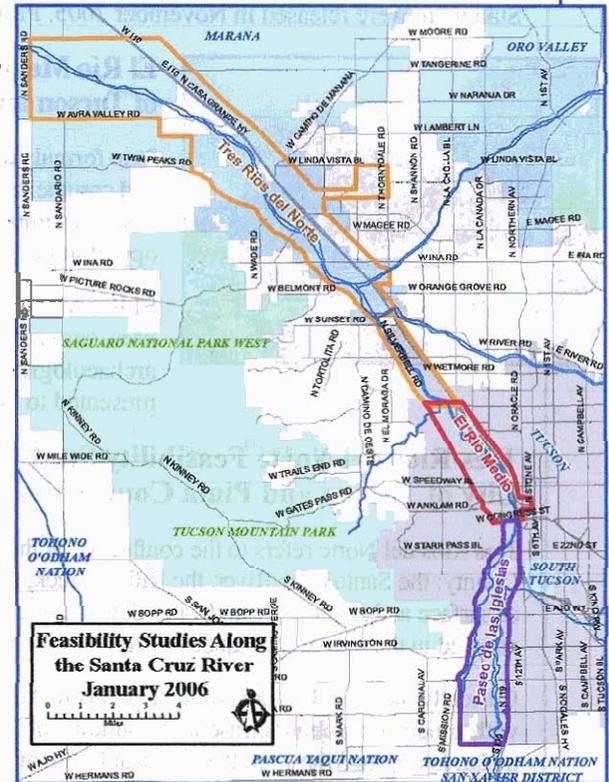
Anticipated Outcome

After evaluating the character of the river and tributary washes, land uses, habitat quantity and quality, recreational demand, and cultural, archaeological and historical resources, alternative plans are formulated, and may include the objectives of increasing native riparian plant and wildlife values, and providing improvements to link upstream and downstream recreational facilities.

The alternative plans are then evaluated and compared, and a final recommended plan will be selected for each study area. Each of the three final plans, along with all cost information and plan details are forwarded, for review and approval, to the Commanding General of the USACE, and the elected officials of the projects' local sponsors. Once a plan is approved by all pertinent entities, funding for its implementation is sought.

Paseo de las Iglesias Feasibility Study (local sponsor: Pima County Regional Flood Control District)

This study has evaluated ecosystem restoration, flood control improvements, and river park trail development. This area once contained some of the most diverse habitat on the Santa Cruz, but groundwater pumping has lowered the water table causing the nearly complete loss of habitat.



A recommended plan has been selected from an initial array of 47 alternatives based on the USACE's analysis and public input. The recommended alternative includes restored mesquite bosques and shrub communities on river terraces and historic floodplains with more-lush habitat conditions in select areas. Water sources under consideration include local stormwater harvesting and reclaimed water. Recreational elements will include the Juan Bautista National Historical Trail and other amenities. The draft Final Report and Environmental Impact Statement were released in November 2005. Project design is scheduled to begin in 2006.



El Rio Medio Feasibility Study (local sponsors: City of Tucson and Pima County Regional Flood Control District)

Plan formulation will commence on January 2006, with a public meeting to obtain the opinions and comments from interested participants. El Rio Medio will be a comprehensive study of water resources improvements, ecosystem restoration and other related features, such as recreational opportunities, flood damage reduction, and groundwater recharge and recovery.

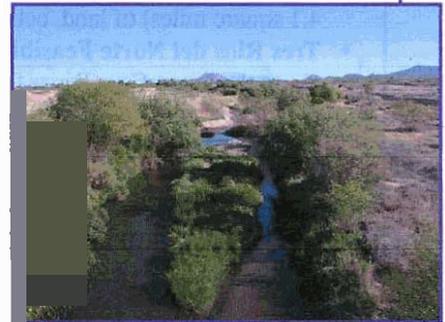
El Rio Medio study will inventory the character of the river and tributary washes, note land uses, summarize habitat quantity and quality, review recreational demand, and evaluate cultural, archaeological and historical resources. Alternative plans will be formulated, and will be presented to the public for further input late 2006.



Tres Rios del Norte Feasibility Study (local sponsors: Town of Marana, City of Tucson and Pima County Regional Flood Control District)

Tres Rios del Norte refers to the confluence of the three major water courses in northern Pima County: the Santa Cruz River, the Rillito Creek, and the Canada del Oro Wash. Gradual loss of surface and shallow groundwater flow to agriculture and the growing urban population has resulted in the loss of thousands of acres of valuable riparian habitat, and a degraded river channel.

Currently the Tres Rios del Norte project is in the process of finalizing a Draft Feasibility Report with anticipated public release in the summer of 2006. This report will identify and recommend a plan to improve the overall ecological health of the river and reestablish a more stable, less degraded sustainable condition. This plan includes substantially increasing the amount of riparian vegetation, addresses erosion and channel degradation issues, and provides increased groundwater recharge and stormwater harvesting opportunities. At the time of public release, a public workshop will be conducted to gain feedback and comments to be addressed in the Final Report.



Public Participation

The public is invited to participate in these studies. All participating jurisdictions have established a public outreach and input process. The following are upcoming public meetings:

- **Paseo de las Iglesias** – Project Update and Design Input Meeting: **January 31, 2006**, 6:30 PM, at Pima Community College Desert Vista Campus, 5901 South Calle Santa Cruz, Tucson, Arizona
- **El Rio Medio** – Plan Formulation Kick-Off Meeting: **Wednesday January 18, 2006**, 6:30 PM, at El Rio Neighborhood Center, 1390 West Speedway Blvd., Tucson, Arizona
- **Tres Rios del Norte** – Project Update Meeting: **February 15, 2006**, 6:30 PM, at Twin Peaks Elementary School, 7995 W. Twin Peaks Road, Tucson, Arizona

Paseo de las Iglesias Feasibility Study:

Jennifer Becker, Pima County Regional Flood Control District
(520) 740-6350, 201 North Stone Avenue, Fourth Floor, www.rfcd.pima.gov

information:

El Rio Medio Feasibility Study:

Michael Wyneken, City of Tucson
(520) 791-4505, 345 East Toole Avenue, www.tucsonaz.gov/planning

Tres Rios del Norte Feasibility Study:

Jennifer Christelman, Town of Marana
(520) 382-2600, 11555 West Civic Center Drive, Marana, Arizona
www.marana.com/publicworks-environmental.html

