

Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan Newsletter



“To ensure the long-term survival of the full spectrum of plants and animals that are indigenous to Pima County through maintaining or improving the ecosystem structures and functions necessary for their survival.”

January 2010

Partner Grants

The Cienega Watershed Partnership was awarded a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant to restore Chiricahua leopard frogs in the Cienega watershed. The project is part of a long-term effort to protect existing Chiricahua leopard frog and other species from exotic species, and to provide new and restored habitat for these species in springs and ponds on public and private lands across the watershed. The project aims to eliminate exotic species in and around the Cienega Creek watershed and engage community support for frog recovery and long-term monitoring. Recent Pima County 2004 Bond purchases have helped the Partnership to secure the grant. The proposed grant period extends from 12/2009-12/2012.

The Altar Valley Conservation Alliance received a 3-year grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to plan and coordinate five prescribed burns under the Altar Valley Fire Management Plan. The Plan is a cooperative effort between the Alliance and its federal and state partners to restore fire to the Altar Valley in order to cut back on woody shrubs and to restore native grasses. The Plan covers more than 600,000 acres stretching from Highway 86 on the north to the U.S.-Mexico border on the south.

MSCP Update

Pima County released the [Multi-Species Conservation Plan](#) in December 2009. Upon direction from the Board of Supervisors, we will submit the MSCP to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for a 30-year, Section 10 permit. The latest plan responds to the public's comments and presents the County's best option for providing Endangered Species Act protection for development activities while advancing the goals of the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan. Additional review will occur later this year when the Draft Environmental Impact Statement is released.

Avra/Black Wash Survey

Regional Flood Control District reviewed a late summer (October) vegetation survey prepared by Recon Environmental Inc. Total vegetation volume decreased for ten of the twelve transects since the March 2009 survey. On four transects, the decrease was significant enough to result in a change of the xeroriparian classification. This decrease in vegetation is uncharacteristic for the monsoon season and is likely the result of extreme regional and local drought conditions.

Drought conditions are significant in other Pima County open space lands. The U.S. Drought Monitor shows that Pima County had experienced “Severe Drought” for over 10 straight weeks in mid-December. The recent rains will not significantly impact the trend.



Environmental Education

The new year is a great time to take advantage of the wide range of environmental education and interpretive public programs offered in Pima County. From casual nature walks to hands-on education workshops, all activities are free and designed to engage all ages and abilities. A schedule of events and activities is available at this link:

http://www.pima.gov/nrpr/eeduc/PDFs/Programs_Brochure.pdf .

Conservation Education Facility Under Construction

A new Native Seeds/SEARCH conservation education facility demonstrating historic and traditional agricultural practices is under construction on the County's Binghampton historic district on Rillito. The project will include classrooms, a commercial kitchen and a courtyard for farmers markets and demonstration gardens. Construction progress and updates can be found at this site: http://www.nativeseeds.org/conservation_center .

Visitor of the Month



Bobcat on the grounds of the Pima County Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation Department.

