

# 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."*

**February/March 2010**

## **Ecological Monitoring Grant Update**

When Pima County published the December 2009 Multiple Species Conservation Plan, it identified the species monitoring that Pima County would undertake. The Pima County Ecological Monitoring Program will include not only repeated measurement of trends for certain species, but also monitoring of other broader-scale ecosystem parameters, as has always been suggested by the Science Technical Advisory Team. The selection of these other parameters will be informed by the outcome of studies that are now complete and being written up for the final report. This March, Pima County and University of Arizona will begin field work to develop and refine a vegetation monitoring protocol. All grant-funded work will be completed in summer 2010. The results of this work will inform the monitoring section of the Pima County Multi-Species Conservation Plan and Environmental Impact Statement.

## **Sands Ranch**

The Sands Ranch was featured in the March issue of Arizona Highways. The entire 64,000 acre ranch reaches from the Las Cienegas National Conservation Area, east into Cochise County to the San Pedro River. Pima County bought 5,040 acres of the ranch in 2008 as part of the 2004 Bond Program. The acquisition represents high-quality grassland and secures an open space corridor between Las Cienegas NCA and the Whetstone Mountains. The county owned portion continues to function as working landscape that allows for cattle grazing.



Sands Ranch. Photo by Kerry Baldwin

The Natural Resource Division of Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation manages over 200,000 acres of open space within Pima County. Over the past several years, the NRPR management team has been working on a variety of strategies to enhance ongoing conservation management efforts on county properties. As part of this effort, a draft set of Standards and Guidelines for NRPR's grazing program have been developed. For more information, visit: <http://www.pima.gov/nrpr/parks/nrparks.htm>



## Buffelgrass

The County is working with the Southern Arizona Buffelgrass Coordination Center on the most comprehensive mapping model development and mapping effort on buffelgrass to date. The project is being developed by the Arizona consulting company Logan Simpson Design. The first phase of the geographic information system (GIS) based project should be completed by early June. The second phase of the project will involve field truthing and site mapping buffelgrass density and distribution in the key areas identified in the comprehensive analysis by the various



Buffelgrass invasion in Tucson Mountain Park. Photo by Doug Siegel

jurisdictions and key landowners. Ultimately, this project will begin to identify the places in the Tucson Basin where efforts to control buffelgrass will have the greatest impact on protecting the native environment, can be done at the most reasonable cost, and will have the best likelihood of reducing future spread of the invasive grass.

## More Grants!

The Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation Department is completing a Habitat Partnership Grant project with the Arizona Game and Fish Department at the Caviglia Well on Rancho Seco to convert a major water source to a solar pumping system and install added storage, drinkers and pipelines to maintain year-round waters for wildlife.

## Recognition

At their annual meeting in January, the Arizona Chapter of the Society for Range Management awarded Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation Rangelands Program Manager John L. Sullivan with their 2009 Professional and Technical Guidance Award for his efforts in managing almost 200,000 acres of working ranches for Pima County. John L. also received recognition for his “above and beyond” efforts to help save the lives of two individuals lost on the County’s A7 Ranch.



John L. (left) accepts plaque recognizing his “above and beyond” efforts from Supervisor Richard Elías.

## “Environmental Education” Saturday, March 13, 8:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

This may be a great year for wildflowers! Learn to identify the abundant wildflowers that provide beauty and color in our desert each spring. This moderate level hike will cover 2 to 4 miles, and will be led by wildflower expert Meg Quinn. Bring water, a hat, sturdy hiking shoes, binoculars and snacks. Ages 12 and up. **Reservations required.** Location to be announced. For information and registration call 520-615-7855 or email [eeducation@pima.gov](mailto:eeducation@pima.gov)

