

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."

November 2010

Mountain Lions and Bobcats in Tucson Mountain Park

A recent report summarizes the findings of a 2-year study to monitor mountain lions and bobcats in the Tucson Mountains, including Tucson Mountain Park. Infrared-triggered cameras were placed at 65 locations with the mountains and in possible corridors surrounding the range. Seven camera sites recorded 36 photos of mountain lions, and 34 camera sites recorded 267 bobcat photos.

Also recorded on the cameras was an opossum sighting (*Didelphis virginiana v. californica*) which indicates a range expansion for the species, and a new winter record of the Mexican long-tongued bat in the Tucson Mountains. The bat typically migrates in the winter. For more information, view the complete report on the Natural Resources website: http://www.pima.gov/nrpr/parks/nrparks/TM_Cats_Final_Rpt_June2010.pdf.



Adult male photographed in or around the Tucson Mountains. Photo copied from Final Report, linked [here](#).

MSCP Application Nearing Completion

In November, Pima County released an overview of the changes that are being made to the Multiple-Species Conservation Plan (MSCP). Public comments and responses are posted at the MSCP website ([add hot link](#)). In addition, the site contains responses to Frequently Asked Questions about the MSCP.

With the draft ecological monitoring plan in hand, Pima County is ready to formally apply for the Section 10(a) permit from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. A recent [memorandum](#) from County Administrator C. H. Huckelberry indicates the application will be submitted before the end of the year. Staff has been meeting regularly with the Service to prepare the Section 10(a) permit application materials.

A public meeting was held on November 1 to receive additional input from the public. Most of the discussion centered on who would be covered by the County's permit, and about how the opt-in program would work. Although the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will not regulate the details of how the County will carry out the opt-in program through the Section 10(a) permit, the County desires to have this program ready to implement upon receipt of the Section 10(a) permit. Once the County submits the application for the Section 10(a) permit, staff will begin working with stakeholders to develop the opt-in program.



Riparian Mitigation

Conserving riparian habitat is an important part of what Pima County Regional Flood Control District does to implement the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan. The District has begun an effort to improve the efficacy of the existing in-lieu fee option for mitigating impacts to regulated riparian habitat (RRH).

At present, offsite mitigation becomes an option only after the applicant has shown that avoidance is not possible, impacts to RRH have been minimized and the ability to mitigate entirely onsite has been proven infeasible. Although used sparingly, a new draft report released by the District finds that in-lieu fees have been insufficient to achieve meaningful mitigation goals. While some habitat has been restored under the existing system, the fees collected have not proven adequate to acquire an equal amount of land, let alone manage it at the level necessary to maintain habitat value in perpetuity.

In October, the District launched a stakeholder dialogue on new guidelines for in-lieu fee mitigation. The District wants to achieve timelier mitigation that will be funded at a level commensurate with actual mitigation costs. To find out more, see [here](#).

Updated Access

The Natural Resource Division of NRPR manages over 200,000 acres of open spaces within Pima County. The Pima County ranch properties and other open space lands are intermixed with or surrounded by Arizona State Trust lands, federal public lands and/or private lands. The lands are managed by the respective owners and Pima County respects their rules and regulations. In most cases, Pima County only has grazing leases over the non-county state or federal lands within an identified ranch boundary. The Pima County Natural Resources have identified property use and restrictions to some of these open space lands, and have posted access maps to County-owned ranches. See [here](#) for more information.

Fort Lowell Park Master Plan

Pima County Cultural Resources recently reached an important milestone in the Historic Fort Lowell Park Master Plan project. In 2006 the County assisted the City of Tucson in acquiring the Adkins Parcels, located on the west side of Fort Lowell Park, and since then, County and City have worked closely together to develop a comprehensive Master Plan for the park and its historic resources. An Intergovernmental Agreement formalized this important cooperative effort by providing for conveyance of a conservation easement from the City to the County, and allowing the County to use 2004 Bond funds in support of preservation efforts on the Adkins Parcels. Two final end products have been completed, the Fort Lowell Master Plan and the Adkins Parcels Preservation Plan. Both documents provide direction for future preservation work on the Fort Lowell project, including implementation of the Preservation Plan using Bond funds. The Preservation Plan is currently being implemented, with early work focused on preparing the Adkins property for preservation and rehabilitation of its three historic adobe Officers Quarters and other historic resources. For more information, you can view the Fort Lowell Master Plan website [here](#).

Environmental Education

Tucson's River of Words Traveling Exhibit: See how local children express their understandings of watersheds and share their view of the natural world.

October-November 30th: Pima County Juvenile Court, 2225 E. Ajo Way

December 1-January 6th: Woods Memorial Library, 3455 N. First Ave.

For more event and programs with the Environmental Education program, please visit:

<http://www.pima.gov/nrpr/eeduc/environ.htm> .

