



Friends of the Desert

A project of the Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection in Pima County, Arizona
300 E. University Blvd., #120, Tucson, AZ, 85705, (520) 388-9925, www.sonorandesert.org

Photos above by Bob Wenrick

Issue 39 Summer 2010

- Arizona Center for Law in the Public Interest
- Arizona League of Conservation Voters Education Fund
- Arizona Native Plant Society
- Bat Conservation International
- Center for Biological Diversity
- Center for Environmental Connections
- Center for Environmental Ethics
- Defenders of Wildlife
- Desert Watch
- Drylands Institute
- Environmental and Cultural Conservation Organization
- Environmental Law Society
- Friends of Cabeza Prieta
- Friends of Ironwood Forest
- Friends of Tortolita
- Gates Pass Area Neighborhood Association
- Neighborhood Coalition of Greater Tucson
- Northwest Neighborhoods Alliance
- Oro Valley Neighborhood Coalition
- Protect Land and Neighborhoods
- Safford Peak Watershed Education Team
- Save the Scenic Santa Ritas
- Sierra Club—Grand Canyon Chapter
- Sierra Club—Rincon Group
- Silverbell Mountain Alliance
- Sky Island Alliance
- Sky Island Watch
- Society of Ecological Restoration
- Sonoran Arthropod Studies Institute
- Sonoran Permaculture Guild
- Southwestern Biological Institute
- Tortolita Homeowners Association
- Tucson Audubon Society
- Tucson Herpetological Society
- Tucson Mountains Association
- Wildlands Network
- Women for Sustainable Technologies

Three Wildlife Crossings Funded for Oracle Road: Preserving the Tortolita – Catalina Mountains Wildlife Linkage *by Kathleen Kennedy*

Wildlife linkages in Pima County received a huge boost in December 2009 when the Regional Transportation Authority approved \$8.2 million in funding for three wildlife crossings across Oracle Road (State Route 77). Scheduled to be built by the Arizona Department of Transportation in conjunction with a road-widening project, two underpasses and one overpass will provide three safe routes for wildlife traveling across Oracle Road within the Tortolita – Catalina Mountains wildlife linkage. These crossings will be the first of their kind in southern Arizona.

Background

The Tortolita – Catalina Mountains wildlife linkage (half of the larger Tucson – Tortolita – Catalina Mountains linkage) has received extensive scrutiny and attention in recent years by scientists, local jurisdictions, and conservation groups such as the Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection. The Coalition has developed a multi-pronged approach to preserving this important linkage. Our approach includes targeting barriers to wildlife movement such as Oracle Road; addressing habitat fragmentation by current and planned development; and acquiring important open space parcels within the linkage.

In 2006, the Coalition collaborated with Oro Valley, Pima County, and the Arizona State Land Department in the design of a 1-kilometer wide wildlife linkage through the proposed 9,000 acre Arroyo Grande development just south of the Pima-Pinal County line. This wildlife linkage will be comprised of clearly delineated natural undisturbed open space located in contiguous common areas rather than in backyards. The linkage configuration was based on scientific recommendations made by Dr. Paul Beier¹ at Northern Arizona University. Arroyo Grande is currently in the conceptual planning phase and is still owned by the State Land Department. However, Oro Valley plans to annex the land at some point in the future and is committed to protecting the important biological resources in the area.

Crossing structures along Oracle Road

After this wildlife linkage was formalized, the Coalition set its sights on addressing the significant barrier to wildlife movement created by Oracle Road. The Arizona Department

of Transportation (ADOT) will begin construction on widening a section of the road from four to six lanes in 2012. In 2009, the Coalition worked with ADOT on developing a funding proposal to the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) Wildlife Linkages Working Group for three wildlife crossing structures that could be integrated into the larger widening project. (Approved by voters in 2006, the Regional Transportation Authority Plan includes \$45 million of dedicated funding for projects that address wildlife linkages and transportation, such as research and crossing construction. The Working Group evaluates funding proposals and makes recommendations to higher level RTA committees for project funding.)

The Coalition analyzed land ownership maps, topographic maps, the linkage configuration designed by Dr. Paul Beier, and an Arizona Game and Fish Department roadkill study to identify optimal locations for potential crossings. In the end, three locations were identified. Given the topography of the land, two underpasses and one overpass were proposed. ADOT

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The Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan

In 1997, the cactus ferruginous pygmy-owl received protection under the federal Endangered Species Act. This spurred dozens of conservation and neighborhood groups to come together in early 1998 to form the Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection. The Coalition's main goal was to bring sound science into land use planning as Pima County developed the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan (SDCP).

The Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection's work aims to protect the Sonoran Desert's natural resources and biological diversity through our participation in the development of the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan. The Sonoran Desert is a unique and biologically diverse region; once this visionary plan is completed and fully implemented, it can serve as a model for other communities embarking on similar plans for biologically important and sensitive areas across the west and the country.

The goal of the SDCP is to allow our community to grow without destroying the things that make Pima County special — the mountain ranges, riparian areas, habitat that supports abundant wildlife, and places where we can enjoy the solitude of nature. With the Coalition's involvement, the SDCP will make that a reality.

In October 1998, the Pima County Supervisors embarked upon the multi-year planning process of the SDCP. The Coalition has been an integral part of this process since the beginning. With many threatened and endangered species found in Pima County, which was and still is experiencing massive growth, it is necessary to implement a plan that will protect the long-term survival of these species and their habitat. The county's vision exceeds federal government requirements under the Endangered Species Act, choosing to protect a total of 49 species under their Habitat Conservation Plan, a key aspect of the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan. Through the protection of habitat, and directing growth to areas of less biological importance, we will ensure that the desert remains healthy and our quality of life is protected.

The Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan is a visionary plan that focuses on:

- **Habitat, Biological & Ecological Corridors**
- **Cultural & Historical Preservation**
- **Riparian Restoration**
- **Mountain Parks**
- **Critical & Sensitive Habitat**
- **Ranch Conservation**

The Coalition's wide array of outreach, education, advocacy, grassroots activism, and conservation planning activities are focused on achieving consensus between all stakeholder groups. This will encourage local governments to act on overwhelming community support for regional conservation planning to ensure that our Sonoran Desert remains whole and viable for current and many future generations to enjoy.

***Together we have a chance
to leave a natural legacy.***

Learn more about the Coalition and how you can help support our efforts at www.sonorandesert.org

Thinking out Loud

by Carolyn Campbell

Spring is in the air! There have been lots of changes here at the Coalition since our last newsletter. Longtime staffer Sean Sullivan said goodbye to the Coalition when he left to explore new opportunities in the southeastern US last fall. We have hired an energetic and committed new Administrator, Gabe Wigtil, a Tucson native who fits right in! We also have a new office baby, Isaac Kennedy, who joined our staff and keeps us all feeling joyous about our work. And after a couple months of work, our digs here in the Historic Y got more comfortable with a renovation. Lastly, and sadly, the office dog Jed passed away last August after a full life as loyal Coalition guardian for the last 12 ½ of his 14 years.



On the work front, we have been as busy as ever, as you can see from the numerous articles in this newsletter. With constant oversight by the Coalition, the 1997 and 2004 Open Space bonds have been spent on valuable habitat; funding has been awarded for wildlife crossing structures on Oracle Road/State Route 77, continuing our work toward protection of the Tortolita – Catalina wildlife linkage; Pima County is preparing the final details of its Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan for submittal to the US Fish and Wildlife Service; the Town of Marana is making progress in its Habitat Conservation Plan on addressing the linkage between development impacts and habitat decline; and the City of Tucson is finalizing new riparian habitat regulations. All of this is occurring with continual participation and hard work from Coalition staff and member group representatives!

One project area where we have encountered numerous roadblocks and setbacks is State Trust Land reform. Why is Arizona unable to adopt mechanisms to conserve our most valuable state lands? Well, state lands are important to the development and homebuilding interests as a massive building ground; ranchers would like to continue grazing and look for longer-term leases; and education is sorely lacking in funding, with educators seeking top dollar when state lands are sold. These competing interests have overshadowed the need to conserve the most biologically rich state lands as open space and important wildlife habitat. Currently, there is a reform effort being negotiated between some of these competing interests, and there is talk of a Special Session in the state legislature to refer another constitutional reform measure to the voters statewide. But neither the potential ballot language nor the reform effort looks promising, so the conservation community continues to look toward another citizens' initiative campaign, with a signature-gathering effort beginning perhaps as early as this November.

We are also exploring new project areas that need our attention. The Coalition has recently been working with Pinal County residents to plan for habitat and linkage protection in important areas north of our county border. Building on the success of Pima County's Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan, we hope to integrate open space set-aside requirements with development policies and ordinances, establish riparian protections, and identify funding for open space acquisitions in Pinal County, a county whose habitat is being choked off by development pressures moving north from Tucson and south from Phoenix. We are optimistic and excited about this new effort.

Thanks once again to all of you for your on-going support of the Coalition's work!

Coalition Staff

Carolyn Campbell, Executive Director — Carolyn.Campbell@sonorandesert.org
Kathleen Kennedy, Program Associate — Kathleen.Kennedy@sonorandesert.org
Gabe Wigtil, Administrative Associate — Gabe.Wigtil@sonorandesert.org
Office line: 520.388.9925
Friends of the Desert Design & Layout: Julie St. John

Three Wildlife Crossings Funded for Oracle Road

continued

integrated these structures into their preliminary designs for the road-widening project and developed a proposal to the RTA Wildlife Linkages Working Group asking for \$8.2 million in funding to assist with their construction. (Note: Only RTA member jurisdictions are eligible to apply for funding from the RTA and all funding proposals require matching funds.)

To assist with the proposal, the Coalition commissioned artist's renderings of the crossings using aerial photos taken by a Coalition volunteer. These renderings provided a valuable visual representation of the crossings and were used in the funding proposal, public outreach materials, and the media."

Fencing will be placed 1½ miles north and south of the crossings to discourage wildlife from traversing Oracle Road and to funnel wildlife to the crossings. This fencing will be designed to inhibit a maximum number of species (e.g. have a tighter weave at the bottom where lizards, snakes, frogs, etc. and smaller mammals might try to pass through) and will also include "escape" ramps in case wildlife do manage to breach the fence and get on to the roadway. The fencing will also reduce vehicle-wildlife collisions and increase the safety of Oracle Road.

In the future, the RTA Wildlife Linkages Working Group will address the need to monitor the underpasses and overpass to determine what species are using them. This monitoring will use multiple research methods and be conducted by experienced wildlife biologists,



Artist rendering of wildlife crossing over Oracle Road. Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection

informing both the management of the Oracle Road crossings and the placement and design of other wildlife crossings in the Sonoran Desert.

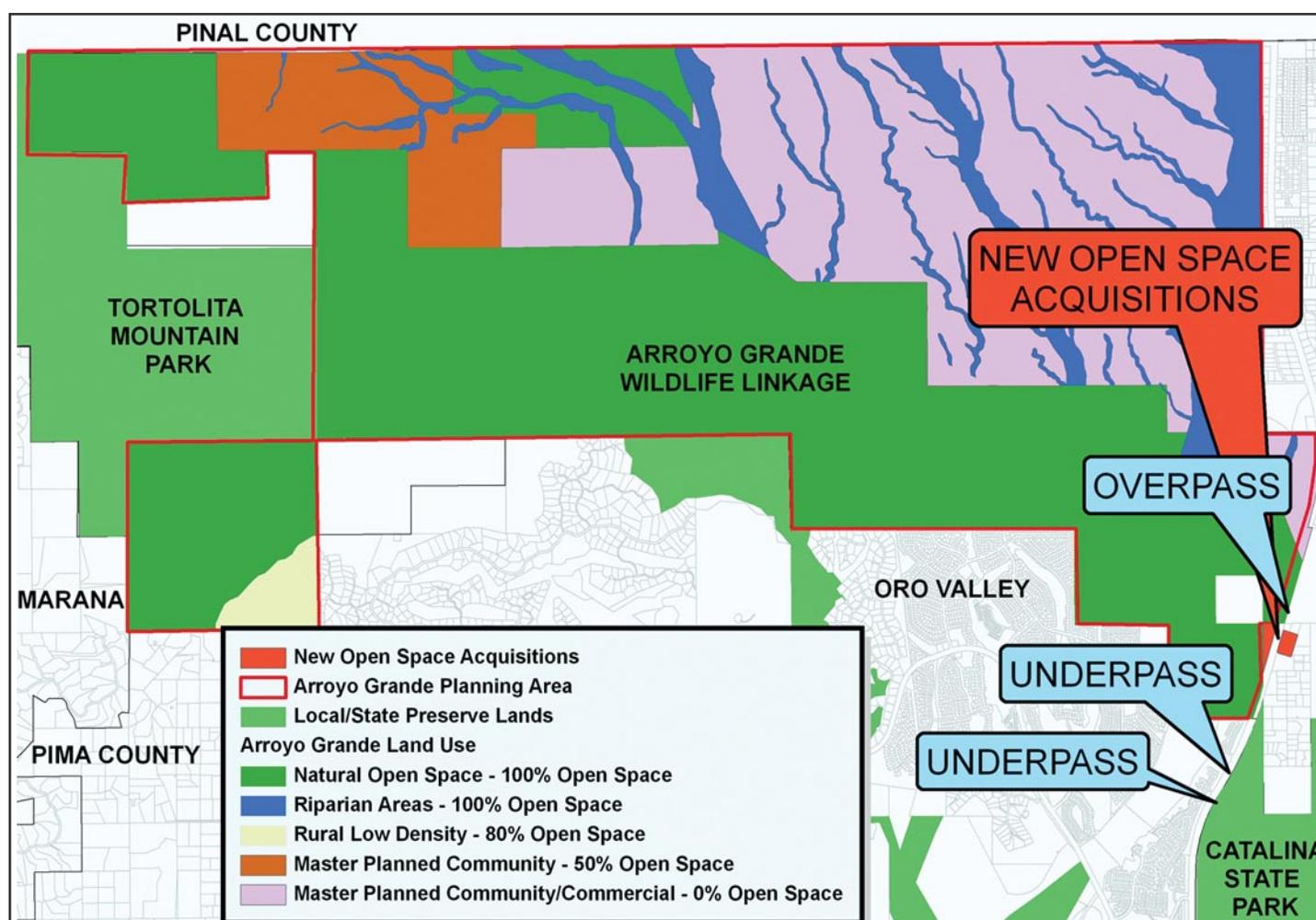
Open space acquisitions

In 2009 and early 2010, the Coalition also helped coordinate the acquisition of important open space parcels adjacent to the wildlife overpass location on Oracle Road. These parcels were purchased by Pima County using money from the 2004 Open Space Bond that was allocated to the Town of Oro Valley. In total, 13 acres were purchased for \$920,000 (see map for parcel locations). Given the constraints created by nearby development, the preservation of these parcels is important. They will provide crucial open space to wildlife as they approach the wildlife overpass from the east and west.

When Pima County voters approved the Regional Transportation Authority Plan in 2006, they in part gave their support to \$45 million in funding for projects that address the intersection of wildlife linkages and transportation. The approval of \$8.2 million of this money for three wildlife crossings along Oracle Road is a critical step forward in the preservation of the Tortolita – Catalina Mountains wildlife linkage. The Coalition has been at the forefront of all of these efforts — the creation of a dedicated wildlife linkage in Arroyo Grande, the planned construction of wildlife crossings along Oracle Road, and the purchase of open space within the wildlife linkage. We will continue this work on Pima County wildlife linkages preservation this year and in the years to come.

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¹ Beier, P., E. Garding, and D. Majka. 2006. Arizona Missing Linkages: Tucson – Tortolita – Santa Catalina Mountains Linkage Design. Report to Arizona Game and Fish Department. School of Forestry, Northern Arizona University.



Arroyo Grande, three Oracle Road wildlife crossings, and new open space acquisitions.

Support the Coalition by Becoming a Monthly Donor

One of the easiest ways to become a Sonoran Desert activist is to become a monthly donor to the Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection. Becoming a monthly donor will allow you to provide a steady stream of support for local conservation efforts. Now more than ever, we need support from people like you!

The Coalition has been at the forefront of local conservation planning, advocating for measures that give the strongest protections to our important native habitats and natural resources.

When you contribute to the Coalition, you help us continue our innovative environmental campaigns that are helping to preserve our irreplaceable natural treasures, save endangered and threatened wildlife, and protect this fragile desert environment. And you can be sure that your voice will be heard through our grassroots action on the issues that matter to you most.

The Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection is a tax-exempt nonprofit organization operating under the 501(c)(3) status of Sky Island Alliance. All donations to the Coalition are tax-deductible to the maximum extent allowed by law.

Become a monthly donor by calling the Coalition office at 520.388.9925 or visiting www.sonorandesert.org and clicking Donate Now. This paperless giving option reduces fundraising costs by eliminating the need to mail supporter renewals. Your support ensures that our work will continue to protect the unique and diverse plant and wildlife found within our Sonoran Desert home.

New Rezoning Requirements Encourage Sensitive Sonoran Desert Design by Julia Fonseca, Pima County

The Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan launched a number of local efforts to protect native plants and animals. The most recent part of the plan to fall into place came in March when the Pima County Board of Supervisors approved new rules that affect future rezonings. The new requirements affect three species of cacti: the saguaro, Pima pineapple cactus, and needle-spined pineapple cactus.

The site analysis will now require differentiating the six-foot and under size class of saguaros from more mature specimens during site inventories. Saguaros greater than six feet offer habitat for cavity-nesting birds, and are more difficult to transplant. Having size class information at the time of rezoning can help promote a site development layout that is more sensitive to biological resources.

The Pima pineapple cactus is listed under the Endangered Species Act. Under the new requirements rezoning applicants will now be required to use the Fish and Wildlife Service survey protocol for this species. While inventory for this species was always required, using the FWS survey method will likely increase the chance of detecting this small cactus. Proposed rezonings located within the Priority Conservation Area for this species would be affected by this provision. These areas are primarily in the Altar Valley and the piedmonts of the Sierrita and Santa Rita Mountains.

A new requirement was also added requiring inventory of needle-spined pineapple cactus. The Priority Conservation Area for this species is primarily located near the Cienega Creek Natural Preserve. To view Priority Conservation Areas for the two pineapple cacti species, visit the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan MapGuide website at

The Pima pineapple cactus depends on a particular ground-nesting bee for pollination. The bee, in turn relies on other cacti species and suitable soils for its existence. Better site design can promote retention of habitat for the Pima pineapple cactus and other plants and animals, including its pollinator. Illustration by Bill Singleton, Pima County



Bobcat in southeast Tucson Photo by Tom Richardson

Do you have a photo of Sonoran Desert wildlife?

Please send your photos to gabe.wigtil@sonorandesert.org for publication in *Friends of the Desert!*



Captured Critters



Tanque Verde Creek near Wentworth Road. Photos by Adrienne VanderLinde

Water for the Environment: The Pima County and City of Tucson Conservation Effluent Pool

by Kathleen M. Chavez, P.E., Water Policy Manager, Pima County

Riparian Protection is one of five key elements of the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan and water is an essential component to the protection and restoration of our riparian areas. In 2000 the City of Tucson and Pima County recognized the importance of designating water for riparian projects located in the urban area, where the damage to riparian and aquatic ecosystems has been most profound. A number of streams and springs in and near Tucson have ceased to flow, and many urban washes have been narrowed and channelized. This means that natural sources of water to the environment have been reduced.

Projects to enhance or rehabilitate damaged riparian areas will need a dependable water source that can provide a seasonal water supply, provide short-term irrigation during plant establishment, provide supplemental irrigation during extended drought, or provide a long term water source, if needed.

A 1979 Intergovernmental Agreement transferred ownership of the City's sewer system to the County but the City retained control of ninety percent of the effluent produced. In 2000, a supplemental IGA addressed a number of water resource issues between the County and City including provisions relating to metropolitan and non-metropolitan effluent, reactivation of the Randolph Park treatment plant, cooperation in managed and constructed effluent recharge projects, and effluent for riparian projects.

One of the 2000 Supplemental IGA principles is that reasonable quantities of effluent should be reserved for use in riparian projects. Accordingly, the City and County agreed that up to 10,000 acre-feet of effluent would be made available to riparian projects each year. Key provisions that were approved for the conservation effluent pool (CEP) are:

★ CEP water will be contributed from the metropolitan area treatment plants after the Secretary of the Interior takes its effluent to satisfy the Southern Arizona Water Rights Settlement Act. Pima County is entitled

to take its ten percent effluent share after the CEP contribution is made. Water providers that have an effluent assignment will contribute a pro-rata share to the conservation effluent pool.

★ A riparian project is defined as a project that is: 1) accepted by the US Fish and Wildlife Service for mitigation credit in a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) developed under Section 10 of the Endangered Species Act, which the County and the City are currently developing, or 2) designated as a riparian project for purposes of environmental restoration by mutual written agreement of the City and County.

★ Riparian projects that do not require reclaimed water will receive CEP water at no charge by the City provided the project operator pays for transporting the effluent to the project site. Riparian projects that require reclaimed water will receive CEP water on an interruptible basis and the City of Tucson will charge an environmental rate using the formula and methodology described in the 2000 Supplemental IGA, currently \$317.67 per acre-foot. Riparian projects requiring reclaimed water on a non-interruptible basis will be charged the retail reclaimed water rate, currently \$797 per acre-foot, and on the same terms as retail users.

The terms and conditions by which this effluent is available must be established in a procedural (or administrative) agreement between the City and County. This procedural CEP agreement is being prepared and no CEP water can be used until after the CEP agreement is executed by the City of Tucson and Pima County.

The CEP agreement will address administration of the conservation effluent pool. It will establish the process for considering CEP requests, address how allocations and apportionments will be made, require an accounting of quantities used, address how CEP water will be scheduled and delivered, and require project status reporting.

Coalition adds two new member groups

The Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection is pleased to announce the addition of two new member groups, Bat Conservation International and Friends of Ironwood Forest. With these latest additions, the Coalition now represents 37 international, national, and local environmental and community organizations. Through their contributions of expertise and experience, the addition of these two groups strengthens our ability to advocate for the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan and habitat conservation planning efforts across the region.

Bat Conservation International (BCI) is an ideal partner to assist our efforts to protect the many bat species living in the Sonoran Desert. With seven species of bat covered by Pima County's Multiple Species Conservation Plan, including the endangered lesser long-nosed bat, BCI will be a valued partner in regional bat conservation efforts. We look forward to working with Bat

Conservation International to protect bat species throughout the Sonoran Desert.

Friends of Ironwood Forest's work on conservation and management issues within the Ironwood Forest National Monument align closely with Coalition projects. The Coalition was a key leader in the movement for the conception, promotion, design, and designation of the Ironwood Forest National Monument (IFNM) and helped create Friends of Ironwood Forest in 2006. Our Proposal for the Establishment of the Morris K. Udall Ironwood Forest – Upland Corridor National Monument in April 2000 called for the designation of 480,000 acres, although only 129,000 acres were eventually included in the monument. Our new affiliation with Friends of Ironwood Forest will allow us to continue working to protect this ruggedly beautiful area.

Friends of Ironwood Forest by Lahsha Brown, Executive Director

Ironwood Forest National Monument was established to safeguard an incredible landscape recognized for its rugged scenery, biological diversity and cultural legacy. Located just northwest of Tucson, these 129,000 acres (almost 300 square miles) encompass several desert mountain ranges including Ragged Top, Silver Bell, Sawtooth and Waterman Mountains.

Containing the highest density of ironwood trees recorded in the Sonoran Desert, the Monument is designed to protect this tree, found nowhere else on earth. The Monument also contains a significant number of cultural and historical sites covering a 5,000-year period.

Ironwood trees are some of the longest living plants in the Sonoran Desert, living up to 1,200 years. They are slow growing and play a central role in the health of the surrounding landscape. Ironwood trees act as “nurse” plants, sheltering and nurturing a wide variety of other plants, including the stately Saguaro cacti, and supporting over 640 additional plant and animal species.

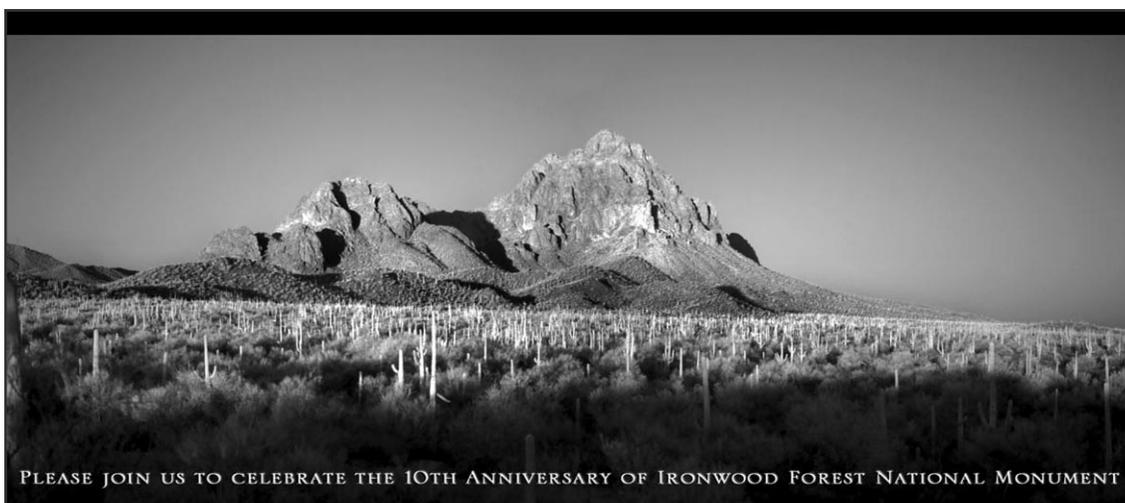
The Monument is managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and is part of the National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS). Both the Monument and the NLCS are celebrating their 10-year anniversaries this year. With over 28 million acres of nationally significant landscapes, the NLCS joins the existing National Parks and National Wildlife Refuges as another way to protect and enjoy areas with outstanding cultural, ecological and scientific importance.

Friends of Ironwood Forest (FIF) works for the permanent protection of the biological, geological, archaeological, and historical resources and values for which the Monument was established through education, community outreach, service

projects and advocacy. FIF provides critical volunteer labor for projects on the Monument, working with the BLM and many other partners. Frequent volunteer service projects include trash pick-up, removal of invasive species like buffelgrass, restoration of illegally created roads, replacing vandalized signs, monitoring resource conditions, and more. FIF is a recently established non-profit, membership-based and community supported organization.

As new members of the Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection, we hope to provide educational opportunities to enhance the appreciation of the amazing landscapes of this region. We also want to promote an increased awareness of the threats to places like Ironwood Forest National Monument.

Contact: 520.628.2092 www.ironwoodforest.org



PLEASE JOIN US TO CELEBRATE THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF IRONWOOD FOREST NATIONAL MONUMENT

You are cordially invited to the
10TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF
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& BOB ABBEY, DIRECTOR, BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
AND KEYNOTE SPEAKER GARY PAUL NABHAN
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PLEASE RSVP TO LAHSHA BROWN, 628.2092, LAHSHA@IRONWOODFOREST.ORG, OR WWW.IRONWOODFOREST.ORG

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or lahsha@ironwoodforest.org, or online
at www.ironwoodforest.org

Bat Conservation International

by Dr. Christa Weise, Bats of Latin America & the Caribbean Program Coordinator

Bat Conservation International (BCI), based in Austin, Texas, combines conservation, education and research to protect bats and the ecosystems they serve throughout the world. It was founded in 1982, as scientists became increasingly concerned that bats, essential to the balance of nature and to human economies, were in alarming decline. The nonprofit organization has achieved unprecedented progress for bats by emphasizing sustainable uses of natural resources that benefit both bats and people.

BCI's conservation efforts have protected many of North America's most important remaining bat caves, saved millions of bats from being accidentally buried during mine safety closures and were largely responsible for creating the first national park in U.S. history to protect a tropical rain forest (in American Samoa). BCI has sponsored research documenting the key roles of bats in major ecosystems, supported research by graduate students in 55 countries and trained hundreds of wildlife managers from more than 20 countries in bat management and conservation.

With a staff of more than 30 biologists, educators and administrators, BCI is supported by members in 60 countries. Two years ago, BCI established its western office in Tucson, Arizona to increase its presence and improve support of conservation needs for bats in the western US. Currently, two of BCI's conservation programs are based in Tucson: the Southwestern Subterranean program led by Jason Corbett, which focuses on conservation of bats and their roosting habitat in abandoned mines and caves; and Bats of Latin America & the Caribbean, led by Dr. Christa Weise, which emphasizes education and conservation for threatened bats and their habitats. BCI is honored to join the Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection in its strategic efforts to conserve habitats for bats and other wildlife in southern Arizona.

Contact: 520.955.4164 www.batcon.org



Leptonycteris yerbabuena, the lesser long-nosed bat, is a nectar-feeding bat important for pollination and seed dispersal of columnar cacti and agave. Federally listed as an Endangered Species, they are migratory and spend most of the year in Mexico. Photo © Merlin Tuttle, Bat Conservation International



Updates

Coalition Featured in New Book on Road Ecology

In June 2010, a new book on road ecology, *Safe Passages: Highways, Wildlife and Connectivity*, will be published by Island Press. The Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection was invited to contribute a chapter to this exciting new publication. Our chapter, written by Carolyn Campbell (Executive Director) and Kathleen Kennedy (Program Associate) is titled *The Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan and Regional Transportation Authority: Citizen Support for Habitat Connectivity and Highway Mitigation*. For the text of our chapter and information on how to order a copy of the book, visit our website at www.sonorandesert.org.

Pima County Multi-Species Conservation Plan

In December 2009, Pima County released Draft 6 of their Multi-Species Conservation Plan. Once it is approved by the Board of Supervisors, this draft will be sent to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service with a draft Environmental Impact Statement and Implementing Agreement for more thorough federal review. After the USFWS completes its review, the MSCP will be made available for further public comment.

The Coalition submitted comments on the Draft 6 MSCP in February 2010. Our comments centered around the following issues: (1) the need to integrate

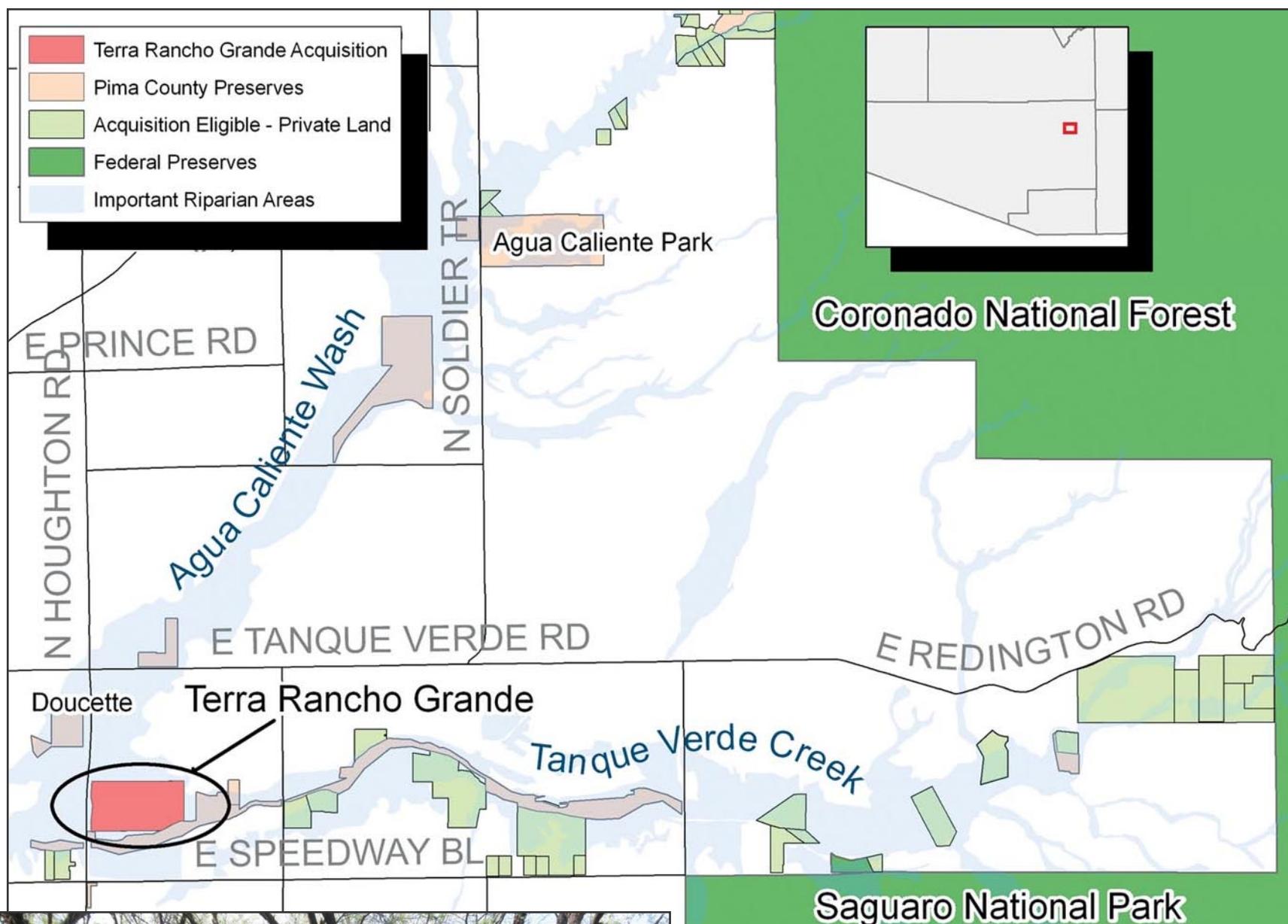
MSCP policies with all County departments, (2) feedback on the preferred alternative and suggestions for a new alternative, (3) the need for significantly more detail on the mitigation credit program, (4) support for grazing as a covered activity, and (5) permanent protection for mitigation lands.

The Coalition will be working with County staff to resolve our remaining comments and recommendations in the months ahead. For the full text of all our comments on the MSCP, visit our website at www.sonorandesert.org.

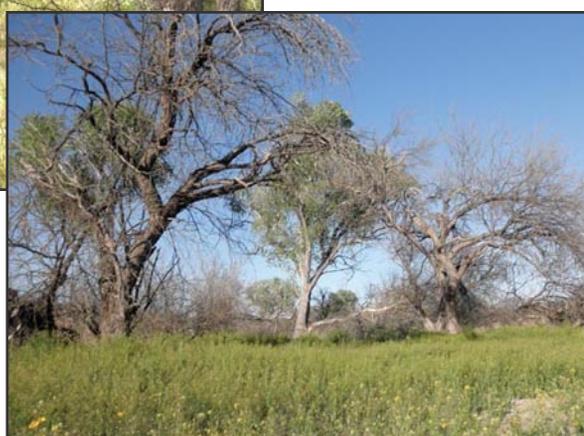
Pima County Riparian Habitat Mitigation Guidelines

In February 2010, the Coalition gave our full support for new Riparian Habitat Mitigation Guidelines that Pima County has been developing for the last two years. The Coalition has been an integral member of the County's Mitigation Working Group and the County expects to send these guidelines to the Board of Supervisors for approval in the summer of 2010. The guidelines provide property owners with detailed information on how to mitigate on-site when development impacts regulated riparian habitat. Guidelines vary by type of riparian habitat and the type of development (e.g. single family residential versus commercial development). The County is currently developing off-site riparian habitat mitigation guidelines that will be used in tandem with the on-site guidelines. The Coalition will continue to provide input as a member of the Mitigation Working Group as these off-site mitigation guidelines are developed and finalized.

Conservation Acquisition Highlights

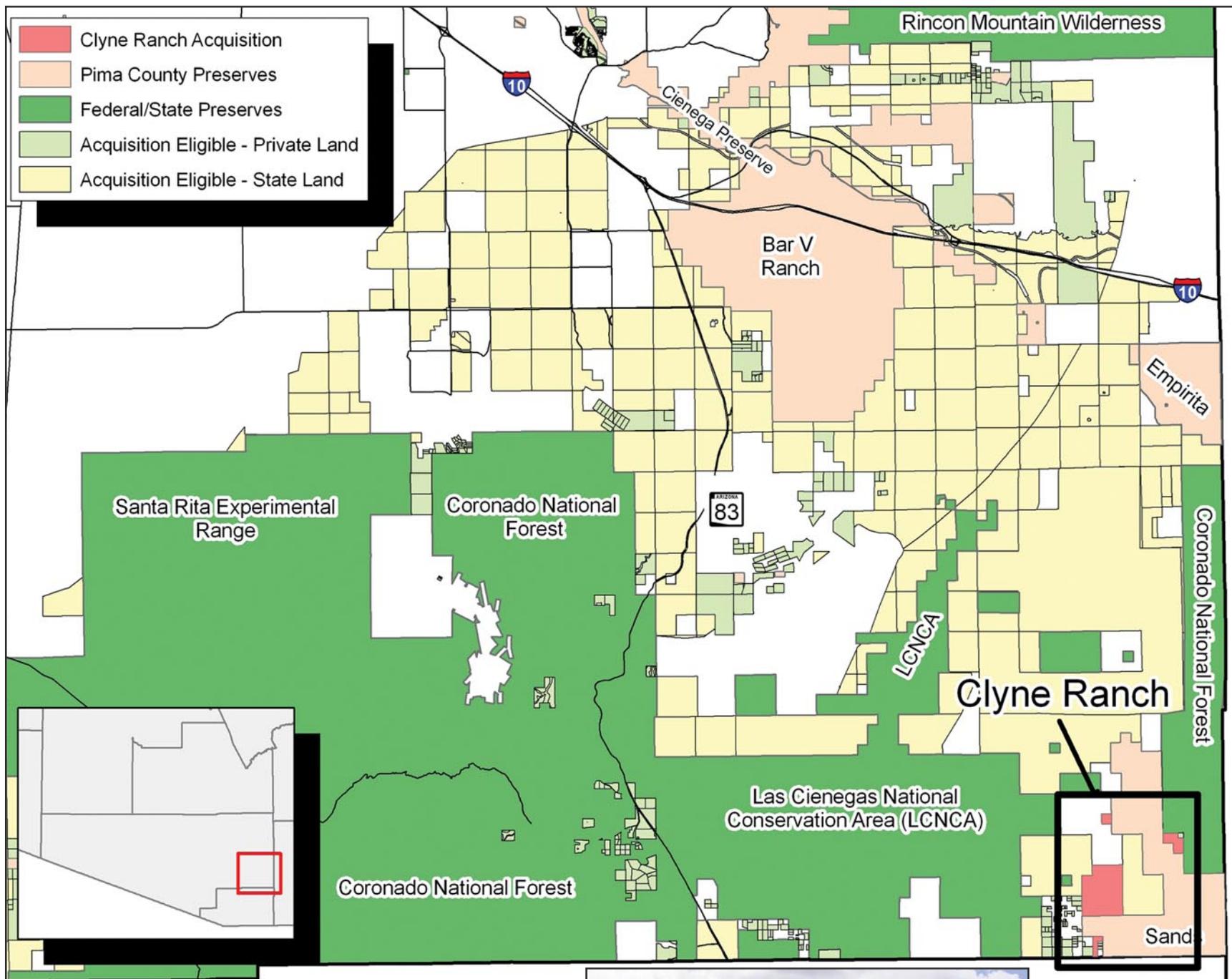


Terra Rancho Grande near the confluence of Agua Caliente Wash and Tanque Verde Creek. Photos by Adrienne VanderLinde



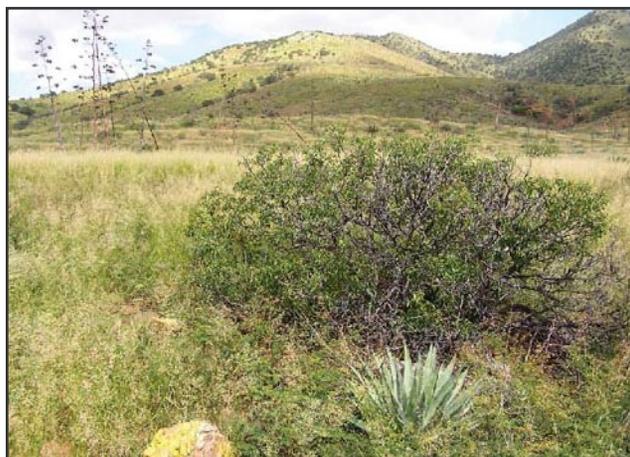
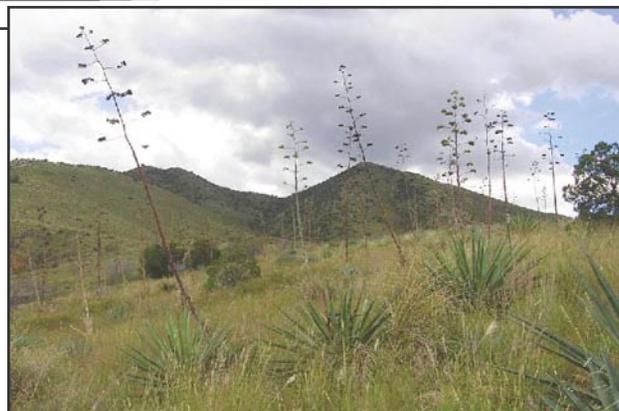
Terra Rancho Grande

The 72-acre Terra Rancho Grande acquisition is located northeast of the intersection of Speedway and Houghton Roads, near the confluence of Tanque Verde Creek and Agua Caliente Wash. This area is classified entirely as an Important Riparian Area within the Conservation Lands System. Because of its proximity to Tanque Verde Creek, the area has relatively shallow groundwater. This allows for a dense population of velvet mesquite, a keystone species in the Sonoran Desert. Along floodplains, velvet mesquite may grow up to fifty feet tall and create open woodlands, or bosques. These bosques provide excellent habitat for collared peccary and many species of birds, lizards, and rodents. Historically, bosques have been cleared for firewood, lumber and agricultural use.



Clyne Ranch

The 880-acre Clyne Ranch acquisition in southeastern Pima County consists of four parcels of land adjacent to the Sands Ranch, which was acquired in 2008. The Clyne Ranch parcels will contribute to the wildlife linkage between the Santa Rita Mountains and the Whetstone Mountains. Clyne Ranch is located on the eastern edge of the Sonoita Basin and contains rolling plain grasslands. This area supports habitat for 15 of the 56 wildlife species protected under the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan. This area consists of Semidesert Grassland with Chihuahuan Desert elements, making it one of the most species diverse communities in the state. The Clyne Ranch parcels also contain wetland ecosystems, which serve important ecological and hydrological functions.



*Clyne Ranch in southeastern Pima County.
Photos by EPG, Inc. for Pima County*

Rosemont Mine: *Still Not a Done Deal*

by Lisa Froelich, Coordinator, Save the Scenic Santa Ritas

Save the Scenic Santa Ritas (SSSR) continues its mission to protect the scenic, aesthetic, recreational, environmental and wildlife values of the Santa Rita Mountains, Patagonia Mountains, Canelo Hills and San Rafael Valley through education and outreach, including protection of these areas from degradation due to mining activities. Our current activities are focused on stopping the proposed Rosemont Copper mine southeast of Tucson, AZ in the Santa Rita Mountains. The mine would have serious impacts on the environment, water, scenic landscape, recreation, and the economy.

Draft Environmental Impact Statement

The Coronado National Forest recently announced that the release of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) has again been delayed. The delay will allow the Forest Service to complete field studies for a native plant (*Hexalectis revoluta*) as well as additional groundwater hydrology studies. A revised date for the release of the DEIS has yet to be determined, but should be announced in the next two months. Following the release of the DEIS, there will be a 90-day public commenting period. SSSR will be hosting a number of events to help prepare the public for the commenting process, and the CNF will also be scheduling a number of public meetings as part of the process. For more information, visit SSSR's website at www.scenicsantaritas.org or the CNF's Rosemont EIS website at <http://rosemonteis.us>.

Action Alert: You can help stop the Rosemont Mine!

Despite what Rosemont Copper would have people believe, this mine is not a done deal, and is a very unpopular proposal to southern Arizonans. Rosemont Copper and their parent company Augusta Resource Corporation have deep pockets and are spending a great deal to try to sway public opinion. Help us set the record straight by signing our petitions online or having your group endorse our efforts (our endorsement form can be found on our website). You can also help by writing letters to your elected officials and to your local newspapers. We especially need help writing to Senator John McCain as he has yet to take an official stance on the issue. Here is his contact information:

Senator John McCain website: mccain.senate.gov/public/ Tel: 520.670.6334
407 West Congress Street, Suite 103, Tucson, AZ 85701 Fax: 520.670.6637



Rosemont Valley — at the site of the proposed pit.

Key points to consider when writing letters:

- ★ The proposed Rosemont mine will have unacceptable impacts on the environment, property values, economy and water quality and quantity in southern Arizona.
- ★ Arizona Game and Fish is opposed: "No matter what the federal government and Augusta Resources do to compensate for the copper mine's effects, the project would bring significant damage to wildlife, habitat and wildlife recreation."
- ★ The economic benefits of outdoor recreation, tourism, hunting and wildlife viewing far outweigh the economic benefits of mining.
- ★ Mining historically has short-term economic "boom and bust" cycles. The environmental damage, however, is permanent.
- ★ The Federal 1872 Mining Act is woefully inadequate in terms of modern realities, and we support comprehensive reform.

Visit us at www.scenicsantaritas.org for more information.

Open Space Bond Program Protects 172,300 Acres

Planning Continues for New Open Space Bond

The acquisition of biologically important lands provides habitat for many different wildlife species and helps to protect the natural heritage of the Sonoran Desert for future generations. While previous bond programs are nearly completed, Pima County continues planning for the next bond election.

To date, the 2004 Open Space and Habitat Protection Bond Program has been substantially completed. Forty-seven properties have been acquired totaling 45,300 acres of fee land and 127,000 acres of grazing leases and permits. Most recently, the county has acquired a portion of Clyne Ranch (see page 9), Terra Rancho Grande (see page 8), Valencia Archaeological Site, and properties along Oracle Rd. (see *Three Wildlife Crossings Funded for Oracle Road*, page 1). Approximately \$10 million remains in the jurisdictional category for the purchase of properties identified by the City of Tucson, and the Towns of Oro Valley and Sahuarita. Visit www.sonorandesert.org to see our interactive map of acquired properties.

Additionally, Pima County has completed the 1997 Sonoran Desert Open Space and Habitat Preservation Bond Program with the purchase of Hartman/Cortaro (see *Friends of the Desert* #38), Dos Picos, and the second phase of Clyne Ranch. This program has acquired 27 properties using the authorized \$27.9 million.

Pima County continues to plan for the next bond election, currently scheduled for November 2011. This bond election, originally scheduled for November 2008, has been delayed three times due to economic considerations. The Conservation Acquisition Commission (CAC) has recommended that the Bond Advisory Committee approve \$285 million in bond funds for the Conservation Acquisition Bond Program. Additionally, the CAC has identified a list of properties to be eligible for acquisition in the program. Pima County Administrator Chuck Huckelberry recommended that \$120 million be considered for the program.

To better articulate the need for open space protection, and recognizing the pressing community needs in other capital programs, the Coalition advocated for adoption of the County Administrator's recommendation plus an additional bond allocation of \$100 million for the express purchase of State Trust land, contingent upon State Trust land reform. However, due to less than favorable support from the Bond Advisory Committee, that option will not be considered in the next bond election. Instead, the Committee voted to support only \$120 million for open space.

In the months ahead, the Coalition will continue to advocate for State Trust land reform and for a sufficient allocation for open space funds in the next bond election.

Pick up the Perfect Gift and Support the Coalition!



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Perfect for keeping the hot sun off of your skin altogether, these quality cotton t-shirts sport a bold Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection logo on the front, and on the back read: Un Amigo del Desierto es un Amigo Mio. (A Friend of the Desert is a Friend of Mine). 100% cotton construction is naturally soft, breathable, and comfortable. Available in sizes **MEDIUM** to **X-LARGE** in **FOREST GREEN** and **MAROON** with and without a front pocket for only \$20.00. Includes shipping and handling.

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Visit www.sonorandesert.org to place an order and to see more photos!

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300 E. University Blvd., Suite 120, Tucson, AZ 85705

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I would like to make a contribution to the Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection of:

\$50 \$75 \$100 \$250 \$500

Make a credit card donation at www.sonorandesert.org by clicking on the red "Donate Now" button. All donations will be processed by Groundspring.org.

The Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection is a tax-exempt nonprofit organization operating under a 501(c)(3) umbrella. All donations to the Coalition are tax-deductible to the maximum extent allowed by law. Your contribution will help us continue our innovative environmental campaigns that are helping to preserve our irreplaceable natural treasures, save endangered and threatened wildlife, and protect this fragile desert environment we call home.



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