



FRIENDS OF THE SONORAN DESERT Open Space Bond Newsletter

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Sponsoring Organizations

- Arizona Open Land Trust
- Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum
- Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection
- Sonoran Institute
- The Nature Conservancy
- Trust for Public Land

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21,389 acres protected in first year!

It's been over a year now since voters approved \$174.3 million in bond funds for Sonoran Desert Open Space and Habitat Protection. To date, the County has already spent one third of these funds, \$52 million, to acquire over 21,000 acres of land. These purchases ranged from properties such as the Tucson Mountain's Sweetwater Preserve, which will provide expanded recreational opportunities close to Tucson, to Rancho Seco, which secures almost 10,000 acres of wide-open landscape in the Altar Valley containing habitat for numerous vulnerable species.

Faced with a multitude of proposals to buy lands not identified in the bond ordinance, the County and the Conservation Acquisition Commission have stayed true to the ordinance voters approved last year by only purchasing properties included in the ordinance. And thanks to the leadership of the Board of Supervisors and the County Administrator, ordinances and guidelines already in place can continue to be used to protect biological resources associated with many of these non-bond properties.

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Tucson Mountains Acquisition

Location: 36th St. Corridor
Size: 72 acres
Cost: \$616,000

Protection of the 36th Street Corridor adjacent to Tucson Mountain Park has been expanded to include the Belvedere Estates, which provides a trail that links the 36th Street Trailhead to the Tucson Mountain Park. Acquisition of the Belvedere property was approved by the Pima County Board of Supervisors and is expected to close this month. The property contains an Important Riparian Area running through it and supports palo verde trees and mixed cacti. A scenic hillside is also protected with this acquisition.



West Branch habitat. Photo by Vanessa Bechtol, Arizona Open Land Trust.

Maintaining this property as open space will also contribute to ongoing conservation efforts throughout the watershed of the West Branch of the Santa Cruz River.

Madera Highlands

Location: Altar Valley

Size: 366 acres

Cost: \$385,000

The Madera Highlands property was acquired to protect the Altar Wash floodplain and to protect landscape connectivity throughout the Altar Valley. The property provides habitat for the federally endangered Pima Pineapple Cactus and is adjacent to the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge. Scenic vistas of the Baboquivari Mountains, Coyote Mountains Wilderness Area, Cerro Colorado and Sierrita Mountains are protected with this acquisition.



Photo by Vanessa Bechtol, Arizona Open Land Trust.

Agua Caliente Acquisition

Location: Agua Caliente

Size: 21 acres

Cost: \$570,000

Near the confluence of the Tanque Verde Creek and Agua Caliente Wash are 21 acres of important riparian habitat for priority vulnerable species that have been protected through Pima County's acquisition of the Doucette property. In addition to protecting wildlife habitat, the acquisition and protection of this property also supports and enhances natural floodplain functions.

Agua Verde Creek

Location: Southeast Corridor

Size: 83 acres

Cost: \$275,000

Situated at the southern foothills of the Rincon Mountains along the Agua Verde Creek, acquisition of the Poteet property protects 83 acres of habitat for seven bird and mammal species at risk of extinction in Pima County. Acquisition of the mesquite dominated riparian woodland and a half-mile segment of the Agua Verde Creek was recently approved by the Board of Supervisors and is expected to close soon.

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The City of Tucson has been supportive of the purchases the County has made within the Jurisdictional open space funds (such as the Jacobs Trust acquisition on 36th St. and the Doucette property along the Tanque Verde and Agua Caliente creeks). The City continues to cooperate on numerous other potential acquisitions. The Town of Marana has offered to contribute funds to potential acquisitions important to wildlife movement under Interstate 10.

The Pima County Conservation Acquisition Commission has worked diligently meeting every month to review and make recommendations on potential acquisitions, set priorities for which properties should be acquired first, and to listen to input from interested members of the public. The Arizona Open Land Trust has also assisted the County on numerous acquisitions this year. So much so, that the County presented the Arizona Open Land Trust with a "Partners in Conservation" award at the State of the County event earlier this year. The Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan Science Technical Advisory Team and Science Commission have also contributed expertise to this acquisition program. County staff from several departments have come together to contribute ideas and expertise to make each acquisition successful. The Board of Supervisors and County Administrator Chuck Huckelberry also provided the leadership and political will crucial to making these acquisitions possible.

By Nicole Fyffe, Executive Assistant to the County Administrator.

Santa Lucia and Rancho Seco Acquisition

Location: Altar Valley

Size: 9,553 acres

Cost: \$18.5 million

Spanning an impressive thirteen miles across the stunning Altar Valley, the Santa Lucia and Rancho Seco ranches provide important wildlife habitat that is critical for the dispersal, adaptation and survival of numerous animal species. It is a vast intact canvas of semi-desert grassland and open mesquite woodland across a landscape that is under considerable development pressure. Pima County's recent acquisition of the ranches protects 9,553 acres of private land and 27,000 acres of state and federal grazing leases. This acquisition, negotiated by the Arizona Open Land Trust, represents the largest open space acquisition in Pima County's history.

In addition to protecting nine species at risk of extinction throughout Pima County, referred to as priority vulnerable species, the Santa Lucia acquisition also protects 14 archaeological and historic sites, including two small Hohokam villages occupied between A.D. 900 and A.D. 1200.

This single acquisition represents 10 percent of all the private lands identified for protection in the open space bond ordinance approved by voters last year. The protection of these lands is contributing significantly to the overall goal of the Sonoran



Photo by Trilby DuPont, Arizona Open Land Trust.



Photo by Randy Prentice, Faulkner Land Company.

Desert Conservation Plan by keeping ranch lands intact and better defining the urban boundary, where developing lands at the urban edge give way to natural open space.

The Santa Lucia and Rancho Seco ranches are located near Arivaca, in southern Pima County. The ranches are adjacent to the federally protected Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge, which protects 118,000 acres of habitat for threatened and endangered plants and animals.

Historic Canoa Ranch

Location: Canoa Ranch

Size: 133 acres

Cost: \$3 million (Plus \$1.2 million from Pima County Flood Control District)

The recent approval by the Board of Supervisors to acquire 133 acres of inholdings within Pima County's historic Canoa Ranch property contributes to the conservation objectives of the 4,651 acres the County purchased in 2001. The acquisition, which is expected to close soon, protects habitat for the federally endangered Pima Pineapple Cactus, as well as the historic values of the ranch and archaeological sites.

Bar V Ranch at Davidson Canyon

Location: Southeast Corridor

Size: 1,763 acres

Cost: \$8.7 million

Located south of Interstate 10 and east of the Sonoita Highway, acquisition of the Bar V Ranch protects rare riparian habitat across 1,763 acres of land. The Canyon bottom supports vegetation that provides wildlife with shade from the scorching desert sun. The acquisition also includes 12,674 acres of state grazing leases that are adjacent to the County's Cienega Creek Natural Preserve, which will help preserve drainage into the Cienega Creek and Tucson Basin. An important wildlife corridor under I-10 will now be preserved and allow wildlife to safely travel north to south. Scenic views of Davidson Canyon and the Empire Mountains are now forever protected from development.

"The number of areas similar to Davidson Canyon is dwindling and I am hopeful that we can all come together to keep the area open to the citizens of this state to enjoy and take care of for many generations to come." - M.B. Pena, Vail.



Davidson Canyon. Photo by Emily Brott, Sonoran Institute.

WOULD YOU....COULD YOU

Reflections on open space protection, contributed by the Andrada Ranch, Vail.

- Would you rather look out from your home on open space...
- Would you rather wake to the sounds of birds through an open window...
- Would you rather smell the greasewood after a monsoon rain...
- Would you rather be startled as a fledgling hawk took off from a limb above your head...
- Would you rather travel a canyon, surprised by the water ponds and moving streams...
- Would you rather pass through desert grasses and flowers...
- Would you rather sit on a patch of open pasture and study the multitude of growing things within a few yards...
- Would you rather see a red tail soar overhead...
- Would you rather feel in the calm and quiet of the country...
- Would you rather watch the desert explode in color during a monsoon or spring rain season...
- Would you rather touch the bark of a mesquite tree...
- Would you rather share the quiet of the desert...
- Would you rather hear the wind moving a chime...
- Would you rather listen to and watch a wash running...
- Would you rather watch the wind move ripples on a stock pond...
- Would you rather feel the easy movement of a cow horse...
- Would you rather see the happiness of a dog playing in a rain filled stock tank...
- Would you rather ride the high country checking cattle...
- Would you rather help an orphan calf or discover the rarity of twin calves...
- Would you rather remember driving T-posts into rocky ground and stretching barbed wire...
- Would you rather discover nature's creatures where you have come, in their homeland...
- Would you rather see a sky bathed in stars...
- Would you rather know the faith in those working with you...
- Would you rather work with the country, improve its resources and pass these on to others...
- I would...I can...you could.

Open Space Acquisitions Completed



<u>Property</u>	<u>Project Area</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Cost</u>
A-7 (Bellota) Ranch	San Pedro River	6,828	\$2,000,000
Baker	Southeast Corridor	155	\$226,000
Bar V Ranch	Southeast Corridor	1,763	\$8,700,000
Bee	Avra Valley	120	\$61,000
Belvedere	36th St. Corridor	72	\$616,000
Berard	South Corridor	7	\$81,000
Canoa Ranch	Canoa Ranch	133	\$3,000,000
Carpenter Ranch	Tortolita Mountains	360	\$1,100,000
Doucette	Agua Caliente	21	\$570,000
Heater	South Corridor	50	\$990,000
Hiett	South Corridor	25	\$720,000
Hyntington	South Corridor	4	\$68,000
Jacobs Trust	36th St. Corridor	80	\$600,000
King 98 Ranch	Altar Valley	1,034	\$2,100,000
Madera Highlands	Altar Valley	366	\$385,000
Mordka	Avra Valley	40	\$20,000
Poteet	Southeast Corridor	83	\$275,000
Santa Lucia-Rancho Seco	Altar Valley	9,553	\$18,500,000
Sweetwater Preserve	Tucson Mountains	695	\$11,700,000

Total Acres Protected: 21,389
Total Grazing Lease Acres Held: 75,000
Total Bond Funds Expended: \$51.7 million

Avra Valley Acquisitions

Location: Avra Valley
Size: 160 acres
Cost: \$81,000

Sensitive riparian habitat along a tributary to the Brawley Wash in the Avra Valley west of the Tucson Mountains is now protected in perpetuity. Pima County acquired 160 acres from two land-owners (Bee and Mordka), protecting important wildlife habitat along the washes. This acquisition preserves landscape connectivity, providing a linkage critical for wildlife dispersal and survival. The landscape linkage along the tributaries to the Brawley Wash ultimately link up with the Santa Cruz River.

Saguaro Slopes Protected

Location: South Corridor (Mission and Ajo)
Size: 86 acres
Cost: \$1.86 million

The South Corridor acquisitions include four separate properties (Berard, Heater, Hiett, Hyntington) that are highly valued for their scenic views of saguaro-studded slopes, which are visible from Ajo Highway and Mission Road. Acquisition of these properties protects the Ajo Wash, which is an Important Riparian Area in the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan, and expands the locally-cherished Tucson Mountains Park south of Ajo Highway. The Board of Supervisors recently approved this acquisition and it is expected to close soon.

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***Conservation Acquisition
Commission meetings:***

September 8, 2005

October 11, 2005

November 10, 2005

Meetings begin at 3:00 p.m. and
are held at The Manning House,
450 West Paseo Redondo.

King 98 Ranch

Location: Altar Valley

Size: 1,034 acres

Cost: \$2.1 million

Contributing to the goal of the Ranch Element of the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan, Pima County acquired 1,034 acres of the King 98 Ranch in the Altar Valley west of the Sasabe Highway. Leases for 3,506 acres of State land and significant water rights were also transferred to Pima County as part of this acquisition. A quarter of the property acquired is designated as an Important Riparian Area by the County. The acquisition of this ranch allows Pima County the opportunity to conduct future restoration projects along the Brawley Wash. The second of three major acquisitions in the Altar Valley this year, acquisition of the King 98 Ranch prevents urban encroachment into the culturally and historically rich Altar Valley, which is the largest area of intact, undeveloped land in Pima County.

Carpenter Ranch

Location: Tortolita Mountains

Size: 360 acres

Cost: \$1.1 million (plus \$70,000
from the 1997 bond funds)

Pima County's most recent acquisition is the 360-acre Carpenter Ranch adjacent to the existing County preserve north of Tortolita Mountain Park. The acquisition was approved by the Pima County Board of Supervisors and is expected to close soon. Protection of this property contributes to the County's 200-acre parcel known as Cochie Spring, which contains an historic ranch site, a spring, and riparian area. Acquisition of the Carpenter Ranch expands the conservation area of the 3,445-acre Tortolita Mountain Park and protects the dense vegetation found within Cottonwood Canyon and Bass Canyon. The Tortolita Mountains are home to several wildlife species, including a large number of bird species, mountain lion, javalina, mule deer, and several types of lizards.



Photo by Larry Moats,
US Fish & Wildlife Service.