



The Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan

A preservation primer

In May of 2004, Pima County voters overwhelmingly approved \$174.3 million in bond funds for the purpose of creating more open space and protecting threatened habitat in our corner of the Sonoran Desert. Cheers from that election will resound long into the future! My old friend Carolyn (C.C.), who's been

pivotal in this effort from the beginning, told me back in 1999 that development was already so far along in our county that just about any piece of land not already platted could be considered sensitive. Roads and building projects were

pushing wildlife out, wiping out important nesting grounds, and jeopardizing plants found only right here. The most striking example of the suburbanization of the Sonoran Desert came last spring when local officials were forced to deal with confused mountain lions who wandered into new developments that had been their territory for centuries.

Now I'm proud to say our county is fast becoming a leader in protecting animals and plants, and they're doing it in cooperation with ranchers and farmers, while opening more opportunities for all of us to get out and enjoy the wonders of the wild, diverse place we call home.

As I write this, Pima County has already spent \$52 million and acquired 21,000 acres of land. By spring of 2006 those numbers will be even better. Of course, it's not about numbers—it's about life—and living in balance. It's about the goodheartedness of folks who live in communities all over Pima County. It's about a beautiful

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legacy for generations to come—human and otherwise.

SONORAN DESERT CONSERVATION PLAN'S ACQUIRED AREAS

The following is just a glimpse, a sampler of the acquisitions already made as the county implements the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan. Read it and be happy!

Bar V Ranch at Davidson Canyon 1,763 acres south of Interstate 10 and east of Sonoita Highway, which will create an important wildlife corridor under I-10, as well as protect a rare riparian habitat. In addition, it expands the beautiful hiking area around Cienega Creek Natural Preserve and will serve as a location for part of the 800-mile-long Arizona trail.

Carpenter Ranch 360 acres acquired north of Tortolita Mountain Park, which protects Cochise Spring and the surrounding riparian habitat—critical for large numbers of bird species, mountain lions, javelina, mule deer, and lizards. This purchase also saves lush vegetation in Cottonwood and Bass Canyons.

Doucette Property 21 acres near the confluence of Tanque Verde Creek and Agua Caliente Wash protecting vulnerable species and natural floodplains.

Historic Canoa Ranch An 83-acre addition to the original 4,000-acre Canoa Ranch acquisition, further protecting endangered plants and early Native American sites and preserving the historic value of ranching.

King 98 Ranch 1,034-acre acquisition in the Altar Valley that preserves another critical riparian habitat in the desert, while preventing development from encroaching on one of the largest intact open spaces in the county.

Madera Highlands 366 acres in the Altar Wash, allowing connectivity for wildlife and giving breathing space to the endangered Pima pineapple cactus.

Santa Lucia and Rancho Seco Acquisition 9,574 acres of important wildlife habitat in Altar Valley, with a vast and unique span of semi-desert grassland (the largest purchase in Pima County's history). This purchase is doubly important as it lies adjacent to the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge, which already protects threatened and endangered plants and animals.

Tucson Mountain Park Jacob's Trust Property 72 acres of open space containing dense stands of saguaros and providing water to the West Branch of the Santa Cruz River, a valuable riparian area filled with rare and threatened toads and frogs.

Tucson Mountain South Corridor 86 acres with stellar views are visible from Ajo Highway and Mission Road as motorists enter through this southwestern gateway to Tucson. This area protects the riparian habitat in the Ajo Wash and expands the Tucson Mountain Park to the south.

Call 740-8800 or visit www.pima.gov/sdcp for more information on the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan. For a list of parks open to the public, call the Pima County Parks and Recreation Department at 877-6000. Be sure to ask about park hours, fees, and permits.