



Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection

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June 26, 2013

Arizona Center for Law
in the Public Interest

Arizona League of Conservation
Voters Education Fund

Arizona Native Plant Society

Bat Conservation International

Cascabel Conservation
Association

Center for Biological Diversity

Center for Environmental
Connections

Center for Environmental Ethics

Defenders of Wildlife

Desert Watch

Drylands Institute

Empire Fagan Coalition

Environmental and Cultural
Conservation Organization

Environmental Law Society

Friends of Cabeza Prieta

Friends of Ironwood Forest

Friends of Madera Canyon

Friends of Saguaro National
Park

Friends of Tortolita

Gates Pass Area Neighborhood
Association

Native Seeds/SEARCH

Neighborhood Coalition of
Greater Tucson

Northwest Neighborhoods
Alliance

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 for 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

Christopher M. McNichol, Chair
Conservation Acquisition Board
Arizona State Parks Board
1300 W. Washington Street
Phoenix, AZ 85007

RE: Pima County's application for funds for the purchase of State Trust Lands

Dear Chairman McNichol & CAB Members:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection, comprised of 41 environmental and community organizations dedicated to achieving the long-term conservation of biological diversity and ecological function of the Sonoran Desert through comprehensive land-use planning, with primary emphasis on Pima County's Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan. I am writing in support of Pima County's request for a Growing Smarter Grant to aid in the acquisition of State Trust Lands to expand the network of open space in the Santa Catalina-Tortolita Mountains wildlife linkage.

The successful acquisition of this land using Pima County funds and a Growing Smarter Grant will provide a key component in the ongoing development of a project to restore and protect a community-recognized, scientifically-documented wildlife linkage between the Santa Catalina and Tortolita Mountains. This locality is one of six regional Critical Landscape Connections in Pima County's acclaimed Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan. In 2006, it was identified as one of Arizona's 16 "high priority linkages" by the *Arizona Wildlife Linkages Assessment*, an effort undertaken by the Arizona Department of Transportation, Arizona Game and Fish Department, other public agencies, and non-profit organizations. Additionally, construction is expected to begin soon on a community-supported and funded wildlife bridge and wildlife underpass along Oracle Road / State Route 77, the first of their kind in southern Arizona. These wildlife crossings will provide a critical connection over and under an expanded and heavily used roadway that creates a significant and harmful barrier to wildlife movement.

The Coalition was closely involved in the process to develop the Arroyo Grande land use plan with Pima County, the Town of Oro Valley, and the Arizona State Land Department. This land use plan, which incorporates a dedicated wildlife corridor, has been adopted by the Town of Oro Valley in its General Plan, for application in future annexations. This acquisition request represents an expansion of that delineated open space, and would support an even more robust wildlife connection between two important wildland blocks – the Santa Catalina and Tortolita Mountains.

Again, I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to provide support for this Growing Smarter State Trust Land Acquisition project.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Campbell
Executive Director