



Coalition for
Sonoran Desert
Protection

Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection

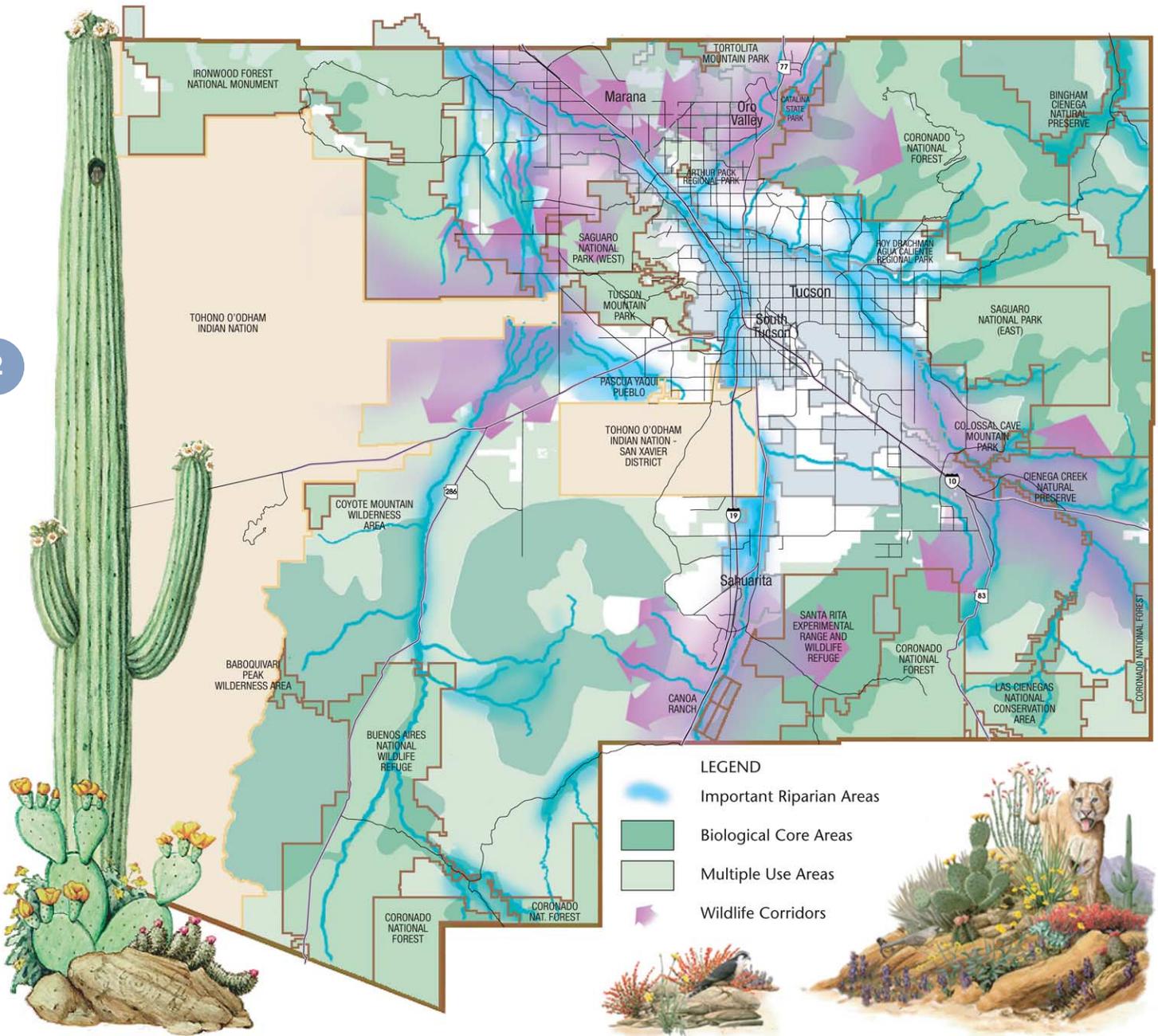
2020 Strategic Plan



“The Coalition connects the dots better than the rest.”

— This quote and others scattered through this document are anonymous responses received from a 2019 Stakeholder Survey completed by over 200+ supporters, donors, volunteers, and community partners.

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Biological corridors and critical habitat as identified in the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan (SDCP). The development of the SDCP was one of the first projects the Coalition worked on in the late 1990s, and implementation of the SDCP continues today. *Map courtesy Pima County.*

Strategic Plan design by Julie St John

Mission

Our mission is to protect the biodiversity of the Sonoran Desert in southern Arizona through science-based advocacy, education, and collaboration.

Vision

We envision a community where ecosystem health is protected; nature and healthy wildlife populations are valued; and residents, visitors, and future generations can all drink clean water, breathe clean air, and find wild places to roam.

Who We Serve

We serve the communities and wildlife of the Sonoran Desert in southern Arizona, along with our member groups.

Where We Work

Our primary geographic focus is eastern Pima County, Arizona. However, we recognize that conservation does not have borders and our projects can be located in the larger geographic area of southern Arizona, including Pinal, Santa Cruz, and Cochise Counties.



Core Values

Conservation

-  We recognize and act on our belief that the conservation of biological diversity is best advanced by the contributions of people of diverse backgrounds, experiences, beliefs, and cultures.
-  We honor the contributions of our members and supporters.
-  We always use the best available science and technology to inform and guide our decisions but recognize that these critical tools may not always be the sole driver of our actions.
-  We use our resources wisely, thinking big and maximizing the impact and effectiveness of our advocacy work.
-  We minimize our impact on wildlife and the environment by conserving resources in our daily work.

“CSDP has one of the best track records out there.”

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Equity and Integrity

-  We acknowledge and celebrate the strengths and differences in others, and do not assume that the ways we are used to doing things are the only correct ways to do things.
-  We recognize that individuals experience knowledge, work, learning, and play differently, and commit to honor and respect those differences.
-  We strive to be fair, honest, open-minded, collaborative, respectful, and accurate in all our interactions and communications.
-  We consult and share power with those most impacted by inequities.
-  We proactively seek opportunities to have conversations with donors, volunteers, and other stakeholders about equity, systemic oppression, and opportunities for transformation.
-  We assume the best of intentions in people, give everyone the benefit of the doubt, and hold ourselves accountable to the impact that our words and actions have on others.



Mule deer fawn. Photo by Tom Wiewandt

Community

-  We welcome and encourage energetic conversations across diverse perspectives and challenge each other respectfully.
-  We have a good sense of humor and find fun and joy in our work.
-  We work to include everyone.

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Transformation

-  We support each other and give everyone a chance to learn and to improve because we believe individuals are the key to societal transformation.
-  We learn from our mistakes and publicly share our learning, so that others can learn from our internal transformation work.
-  We are not afraid to have courageous, sometimes even painful conversations that may lead to the positive transformation of our organization and of the wider community.
-  We recognize our role of supporting leaders and organizations to transform policies and systems, and only take the lead on specific advocacy issues that are directly connected to our mission.



A dam on the San Pedro River. Photo courtesy Gilbert Urias/Cascabel Conservation Association

Long-Term Goals

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Looking ahead 25 years, our long-term goals are infused with hope, optimism, a belief in the transformative power of a diverse and committed group of people and organizations, and the realities and challenges we face to protect and preserve the beautifully diverse Sonoran Desert for future generations.

In the next 25 years, we hope to achieve the following outcomes:

-  A network of protected open spaces — both large and small preserve areas, publicly and privately owned, and preserved in perpetuity — that protect the wide array of wildlife and wildlife habitats found in the Sonoran Desert. This open space network will contribute to the growth of healthy wildlife populations, including wildlife species that are currently threatened and endangered.
-  A network of wildlife crossings, both bridges and underpasses, built throughout southeast Arizona, that enable wildlife to cross our large roadways safely and provide connection points between large preserve areas and mountain ranges.
-  A community, including residents, children, and visitors, that values and understands the importance of healthy wildlife populations.
-  Robust, scientifically-based, forward-thinking water conservation policies that values water for people and the environment.
-  A resilient, united, and adaptable community that actively responds to the impacts of human-induced climate change on our water supply, invasive species, wildlife habitats, wildlife, and the Sonoran Desert in general.

History and Impact to Date

In 1997, the cactus ferruginous pygmy-owl received federal protection under the Endangered Species Act. This spurred over 40 conservation and neighborhood groups to come together to form the Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection in February of 1998, with the main goal of bringing sound science and planning into the equation and to work with Pima County to develop, adopt, and implement the ground-breaking Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan (SDCP). The Coalition is currently comprised of 30 member groups, representing over 30,000 members, in addition to its own community of supporters, volunteers, and donors. The Coalition's small staff works on a grassroots level, leveraging the expertise, experience, and knowledgebase of our member groups and other environmental partners into long-lasting positive change for Sonoran Desert conservation.

“The Coalition is respected by local governments for its use of facts in protecting wildlife. Additionally, the Coalition tries to work with governments in a pro-active manner.”

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“CSDP is engaged at the local policy level like few other organizations and is the only non-governmental organization watch-dogging the implementation of the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan.”

Major Accomplishments to Date

Sands Ranch is protected as part of the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan. *Photo courtesy Pima County*

The Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan

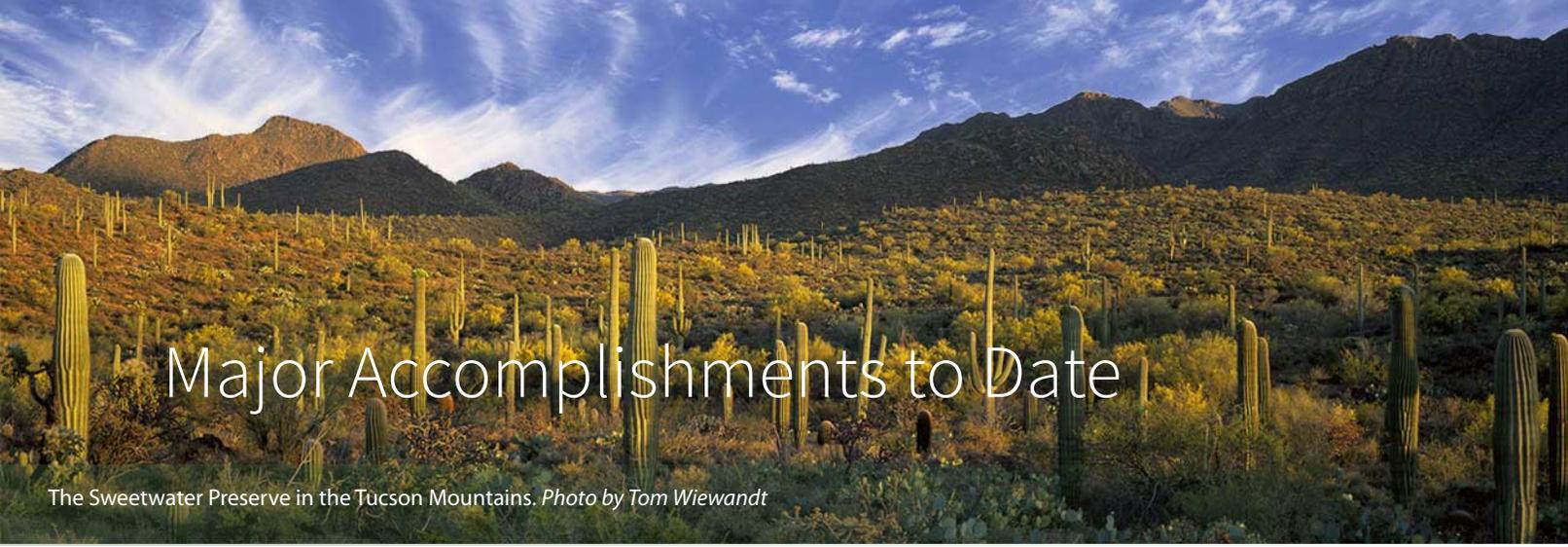
Initiated by Pima County in 1998 and developed with leadership of the Coalition, the SDCP is the foundation for our conservation projects and goals. It has been nationally recognized and still serves as a model for habitat conservation plans around the country. The Coalition continues to be a lead community advocate for the SDCP.

Ironwood Forest National Monument

Created in 2000 by President Bill Clinton after the Coalition and other community groups campaigned for its protection, Ironwood Forest is located 25 miles northwest of Tucson and protects over 129,000 acres of beautiful and rugged Sonoran Desert habitat.

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A sea of saguaros creates a stunning landscape at the Ironwood Forest National Monument. *Photo by Bob Wick/BLM*



Major Accomplishments to Date

The Sweetwater Preserve in the Tucson Mountains. Photo by Tom Wiewandt

Conservation Lands System

Under the direction of a team of renowned scientists and community partners, including the Coalition, Pima County adopted the Conservation Lands System (CLS) in 2001. This map and associated policies have resulted in the preservation of thousands of acres of important wildlife habitat around Pima County on both private and public lands. The CLS continues to be applied today to private developments and Pima County projects. It ensures that our important riparian areas and wildlife habitat remains protected and connected.

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Open Space Protection

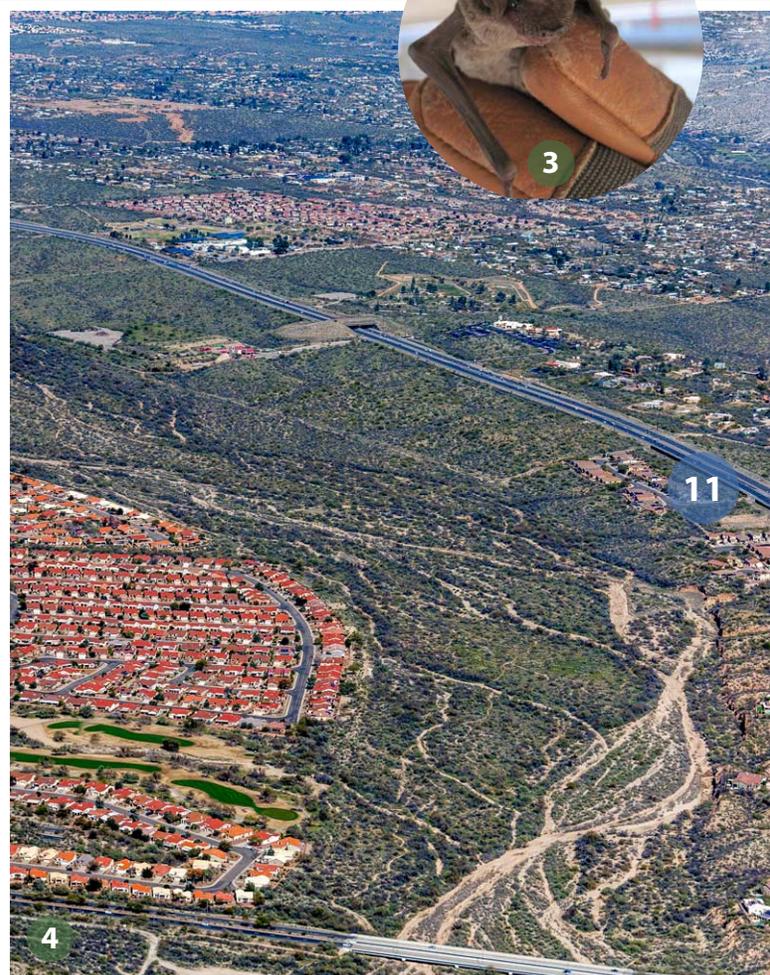
In 2004, Pima County voters overwhelmingly approved the Open Space Bond with $\frac{2}{3}$ of voters giving the thumbs up to open space protection. The Coalition led the public education and outreach campaign leading up to the election. This bond included \$174.3 million for the purchase of important open space. Pima County protected over 200,000 acres of open space with this money — an incredible accomplishment! The Coalition continues to advocate for new open space purchases as opportunities arise. We also continue to oppose threats to protected open space, such as the Rosemont Mine and the proposed Interstate 11 route in Avra Valley.





Regional Transportation Authority Plan

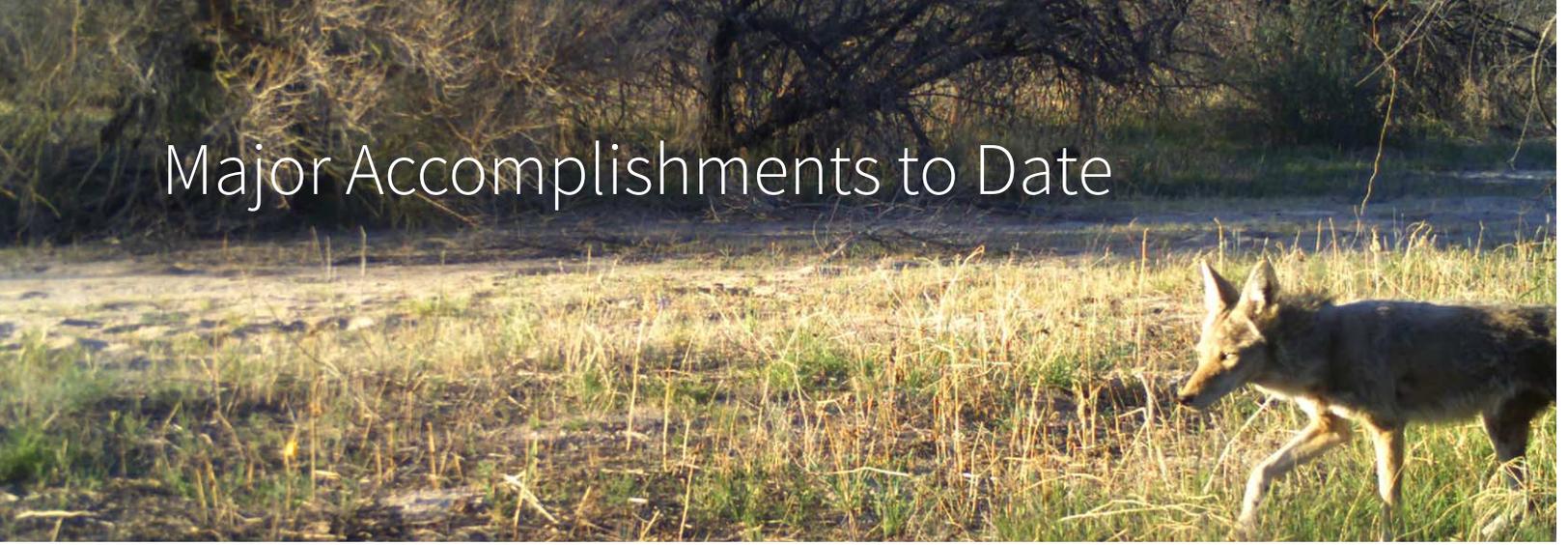
The Regional Transportation Authority Plan and sales tax were both approved by voters in 2006 and included \$45 million in wildlife linkages infrastructure. These monies fund the construction of wildlife crossings and wildlife fencing around Pima County, such as the Oracle Road wildlife bridge; the protection of bat habitat on local bridges; and original and important research on Sonoran Desert wildlife. The Coalition led the effort to have this money included in the RTA Plan and serves on the RTA's Wildlife Linkages Subcommittee.



1 The Oracle Road wildlife bridge under construction in 2015. **2** A herd of mule deer cross over the completed Oracle Road wildlife bridge, traversing Oracle Road safely. *Photo by Arizona Game and Fish Department* **3** Mexican free-tailed bat **4** An aerial view of the Oracle Road wildlife bridge, surrounding development, and open space. *Photo by Frank Staub in collaboration with Lighthawk, Inc.* **5,6** A bobcat and wild turkey near a culvert and existing bridge along I-10 East. *Bobcat photo courtesy Raynor Vandeven*



Major Accomplishments to Date



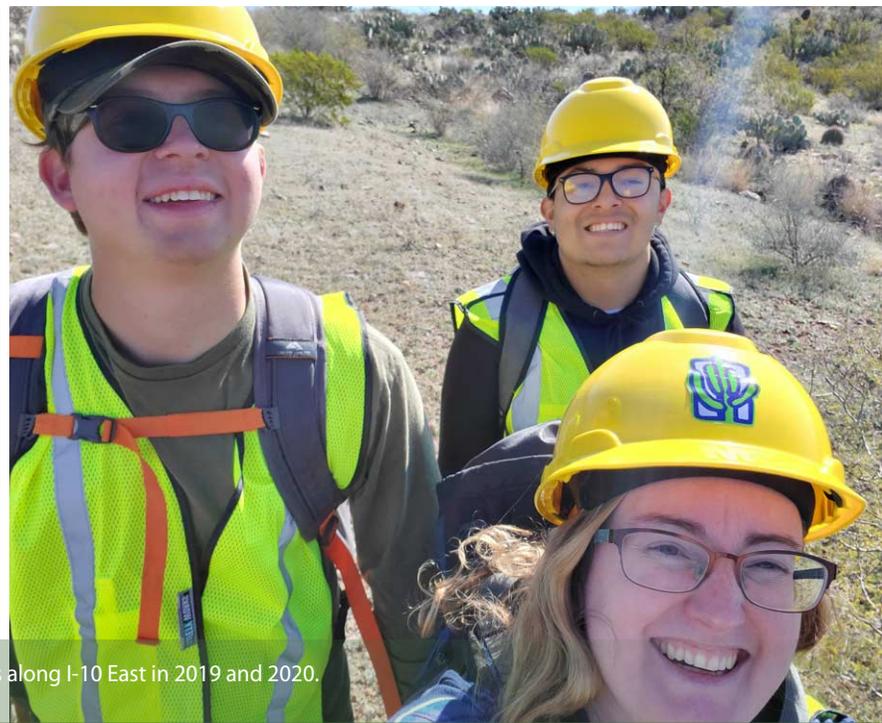
Habitat Conservation Planning

After over 15 years of planning, Pima County's Multi-Species Conservation Plan (MSCP) was approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 2016. This groundbreaking plan provides federal coverage for 44 vulnerable, threatened, and endangered species around Pima County, which in turn protects a wide array of other species. The Coalition worked with Pima County every step of the way to ensure the MSCP contains the most robust and scientifically based conservation policies.

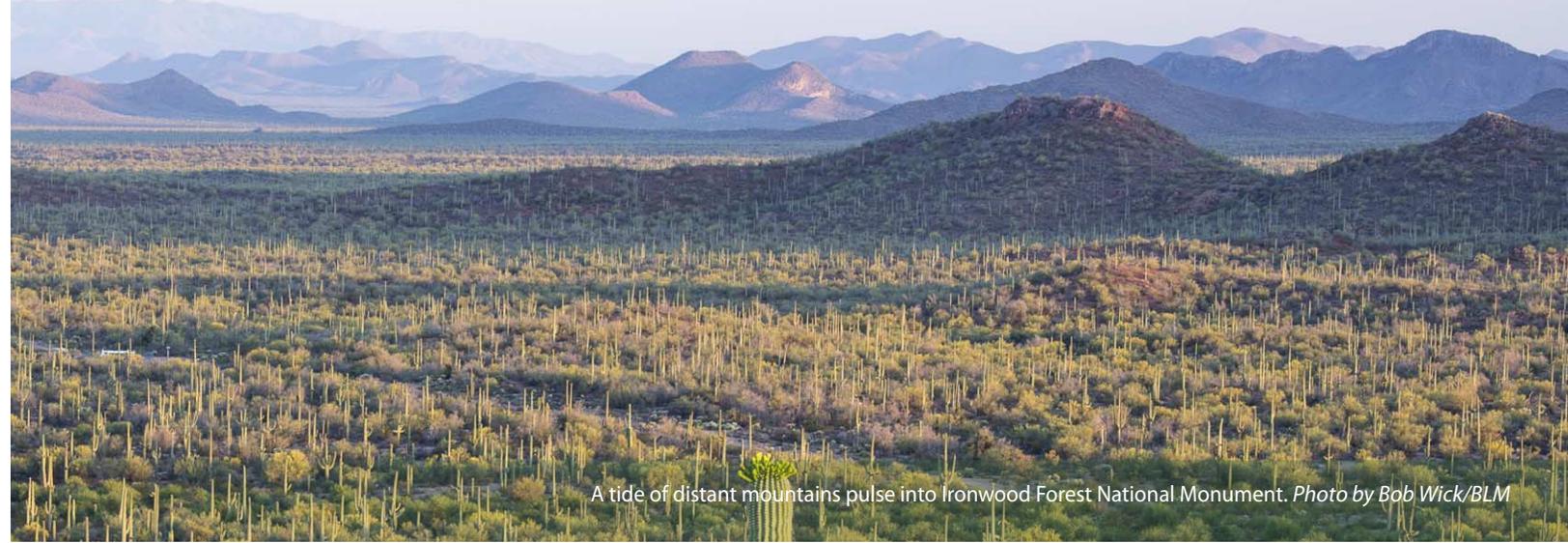
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Community Science

The Coalition has been a leader in community science in our region. Our popular Wildlife Camera Monitoring Program launched in 2012 with four cameras and has grown to over 85 cameras deployed in our threatened wildlife linkages. The photos from these cameras provide important data on wildlife presence, diversity, and movement in three local wildlife linkages.



Coalition staff and volunteers setting up and monitoring wildlife cameras along I-10 East in 2019 and 2020.



A tide of distant mountains pulse into Ironwood Forest National Monument. Photo by Bob Wick/BLM

Interstate 11

The Coalition is the lead community organization opposing the Recommended Alternative route for federal Interstate 11 in southern Arizona. Moving forward, we will continue to oppose this route and engage with the community to provide more information about what would be lost if this new freeway is constructed.

Water Resources Protection

The conservation of our water resources is a critical component of Sonoran Desert conservation. Through smart land-use planning and strong local policies, we advocate for the conservation of existing water resources and the riparian habitat that these water resources support. We are a founding member of the Community Water Coalition of Southern Arizona and work with local jurisdictions on creating and developing their water-related policies.



“The Coalition is crucial to the future of southern Arizona.”

Our Unique Role

The Coalition fills an important niche in this community and works hard to stay focused on our specific mission. As a true coalition, our niche is centered on advocating for the protection and connection of open spaces in southeast Arizona — and all the supporting issues that fall under that umbrella — through our relationships with local governments, elected officials, and our community partners. Our strength lies in our ability to speak for all our member groups; our structure as a true coalition amplifies our voice and increases our leverage.

Our Priorities

A tide of distant mountains pulse into Ironwood Forest National Monument. Photo by Bob Wick/BLM

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In the next 3–5 years, we aim to accomplish the following goals and objectives in the areas of Program and Organizational Development.

Program Goal

Protect and restore Sonoran Desert wildlife linkages

Objectives:

-  Protect and restore the Rincon-Santa Rita-Whetstone Mountains wildlife linkage by implementing wildlife linkage protection projects along Interstate 10, the main barrier to wildlife movement in this wildlife linkage.
-  Protect and restore the Santa Catalina-Tortolita Mountains wildlife linkage by maintaining the Oracle Road wildlife crossings and protecting nearby State Trust Land, Pima County-owned open space, and Catalina State Park.
-  Protect and restore the Tucson-Tortolita Mountains wildlife linkage by pursuing a wildlife bridge over Interstate 10 near the Avra Valley Road exit, a wildlife bridge over Rattlesnake Pass, and the protection of connected open spaces throughout the linkage area.
-  Ensure that any second Regional Transportation Authority plan submitted to voters includes adequate funding for additional wildlife linkages infrastructure.

Program Goal

Protect important open spaces throughout the Sonoran Desert of southern Arizona

Objectives:

- 🌵 Create a network of biologically important lands that are protected in perpetuity, allowing wildlife to move freely across the landscape by connecting open spaces and large preserve areas.
- 🌵 Succeed in altering the proposed Interstate 11 route through Pima County so that the route is co-located with Interstate 10 from the intersection with Interstate 19 to the Pinal County line.



Program Goal

Provide engaging, helpful information to the larger community about the importance of protecting and connecting the Sonoran Desert

Objectives:

- 🌵 With the assistance of community partners, adapt the Critter Cam Program to reach more diverse communities in Tucson.
- 🌵 Actively pursue and take advantage of opportunities to participate in community events and presentations to teach a wide variety of community members about the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan, the Coalition's mission, programs, and impact, and ways for these community members to get involved in our work in the future.



Program Goal

Implement all of our programs with a lens of environmental stewardship

Objective:

- 🌵 Actively focus on reducing waste, using eco-friendly products, and being creative and thoughtful with our use of resources during the implementation of our programs.



Our Priorities



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Organizational Development Goals

Operate the Coalition with a conservative, realistic budget using the best practices of non-profit fiscal management.

Set and meet realistic, yet ambitious, yearly fundraising goals, targeting foundations, individuals, member groups, and businesses, and if possible, unrestricted funding, in order to support our annual budget and reserve funds.

Communicate regularly and effectively with donors, volunteers, supporters, member groups, and community partners about our programs and impact in the community.

Maintain adequate and growing capacity to meet our goals and mission, by expanding our professional growth and by taking active steps to improve the diversity, equity, and inclusion of people benefiting from our work and our staff, Board, and Advisory Committee.

Conclusion

The Coalition's wide array of outreach, education, advocacy, grassroots activism, and conservation planning activities are focused on achieving success in protecting biological diversity in southern Arizona. We work toward achieving consensus between key stakeholder groups when possible on a variety of issues and projects. We leverage the resources of our member groups and community partners to craft science-based solutions to challenging and urgent problems. Our team of incredible volunteers are also essential to achieving our mission — they give hours and hours of their time to our programs and goals and we could not be more grateful for each and every one of them.

As the world continues to shift and change in both predictable and unpredictable ways, we remain more committed than ever to doing everything within our power to protect the beautiful and biodiverse Sonoran Desert we call home.

A photograph of a desert landscape featuring several saguaro cacti in the foreground and middle ground. The background shows rugged, rocky mountains under a blue sky with scattered white and grey clouds. The lighting suggests late afternoon or early morning.

“The Coalition is a leader in bringing a collective voice to policy discussions and efforts.”



The northern Tucson Mountains at sunset, near the proposed route for Interstate 11. *Photo by Frank Staub*

Who We Are

Empire Grasslands. Photo by Tom Wiewandt

Staff

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Whelan *Program and Operations Manager*

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Member Groups

Arizona Center for Law in the Public Interest
Arizona Native Plant Society
Bat Conservation International
Cascabel Conservation Association
Center for Biological Diversity
Center for Environmental Ethics
Defenders of Wildlife
Desert Watch
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
Genius Loci Foundation
Native Seeds / SEARCH
Protect Land and Neighborhoods
Safford Peak Watershed Education Team
Save the Scenic Santa Ritas
Sierra Club – Grand Canyon Chapter
Sierra Club – Rincon Group
Sky Island Alliance
Society for Ecological Restoration
Southwestern Biological Institute
Tortolita Homeowners Association
Tucson Audubon Society
Tucson Herpetological Society
Tucson Mountains Association
Wildlands Network