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Multiple public agencies and conservation groups team up to improve wildlife connectivity

Volunteers remove miles of old farm fencing that often proves deadly for wildlife

TUCSON – A new partnership has kicked off in Tucson’s west valley to improve and enhance wildlife movement between natural areas by removing miles of deadly fencing barriers.

These areas include Saguaro National Park West, Ironwood Forest National Monument, Bureau of Reclamation lands, Tohono O’odham Nation lands, and thousands of acres of retired farmlands owned by the City of Tucson. Pre-registered volunteers will meet at **Three Points junction of Highways 86 and 286 at 8am on March 10, 11, and 12** and expect to remove and haul away several miles of this oftentimes deadly fencing.

“Some of these fences have been around for a hundred years and have no current purpose,” said Carolyn Campbell of the conservation group Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection. “But what they do is block the movement of wildlife throughout the landscape.”

The unique partnership began seven years ago to share information between agencies on projects that may need input from agencies and NGOs. It soon emerged that multiple land management agencies had many outdated fencing that are impeding wildlife, with animal carcasses found hung up on barbed wire while attempting to jump or crawl through the fence.

“Barbed wire fences can stop large animals, change their movement patterns, and keep them away from water and food sources they need to survive,” says Don Swann, a biologist at Saguaro National Park. “Animals can also be killed trying to jump over a barbed wire fence if they become entangled and are not able to free themselves.”

The Friends of Ironwood Forest has, for years, advocated for the National Monument as well as provided volunteers for service projects. Tom Hannagan, President of the Friends non-profit, stated, “We have been very pleased to start work on a mission that has such a dynamic impact on area wildlife. As well, it’s a bright opportunity for a diverse mixture of local conservation groups to join together on a common ground issue.”