



Desert Fence Busters

Annual Report: Jan-Dec 2021

BACKGROUND

In 1916 the first formal organization was created to protect declining wildlife populations in the Tucson area, called the Tucson Game Protective Association. This group primarily worked to regulate hunting and designate wildlife preserves immediately outside the city. In the century since then, new challenges have emerged for wildlife to thrive in these protected areas: construction of the Central Arizona Project canal, expanding urbanization, and increasingly arid conditions. Today, wildlife have numerous obstacles to overcome to continue to persist on this landscape.

In 2021, a group of stakeholders working west of Tucson in the Avra Valley began organizing to remove obsolete fences that unnecessarily impede wildlife movement. The valley has extensive retired agricultural lands that are bisected by fences that are no longer needed. The Desert Fence Busters is a collection of volunteers working with landowners to identify obsolete fences and remove them for the benefit of wildlife movement.

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

NGO: Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection, Friends of Ironwood Forest, Friends of Saguaro National Park

Business: BKW Farms

Local Government: City of Tucson (Tucson Water)

County: Pima County (Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation; Flood Control; and Office of Sustainability & Conservation)

State: Arizona Game and Fish Department

Federal: National Park Service, US Bureau of Reclamation, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management

Tribal: Tohono O'odham Nation

University: University of Arizona, Arizona State University

2021 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Desert Fence Busters spent much of 2021 exploring the extent of obsolete fences in the Avra Valley, raising awareness amongst stakeholders, obtaining permissions from land managers, and recruiting volunteers.

- **Events (1):** December 11, 2021
- **Jurisdictions:** City of Tucson (Ed Anway) Property, Saguaro National Park
- **Number of Volunteers:** 71
- **Volunteer Hours:** 445 hours
- **Miles of Fence Removed:** 3.4 miles
- **Weight of Fence Removed:** 4,180 lbs
- **Scrap Value of Fence Removed:** \$251
- **Value of Volunteer Hours¹:** \$7,062
- **In-Kind Equipment/Supplies Used:** AGFD vehicle, trailer, wire roller, tools (loppers, bolt cutters, gloves); Friends of Ironwood canopy, tables, chairs, port-a-potties.

¹ Median hourly wage from US Bureau of Labor Statistics "Farmworkers and Laborers" in Tucson area: \$15.87.

PHOTOS



Figure 1. A mule deer entangled in a fence (top left; photo credit: Desert Fence Busters); volunteer Caleb Deupree (top right; photo credit: Don Swann) and American Conservation Experience interns Vic Villaseñor and Trevor Brant (bottom; photo credit: Don Swann) removing obsolete fencing at the December 11, 2021 event.

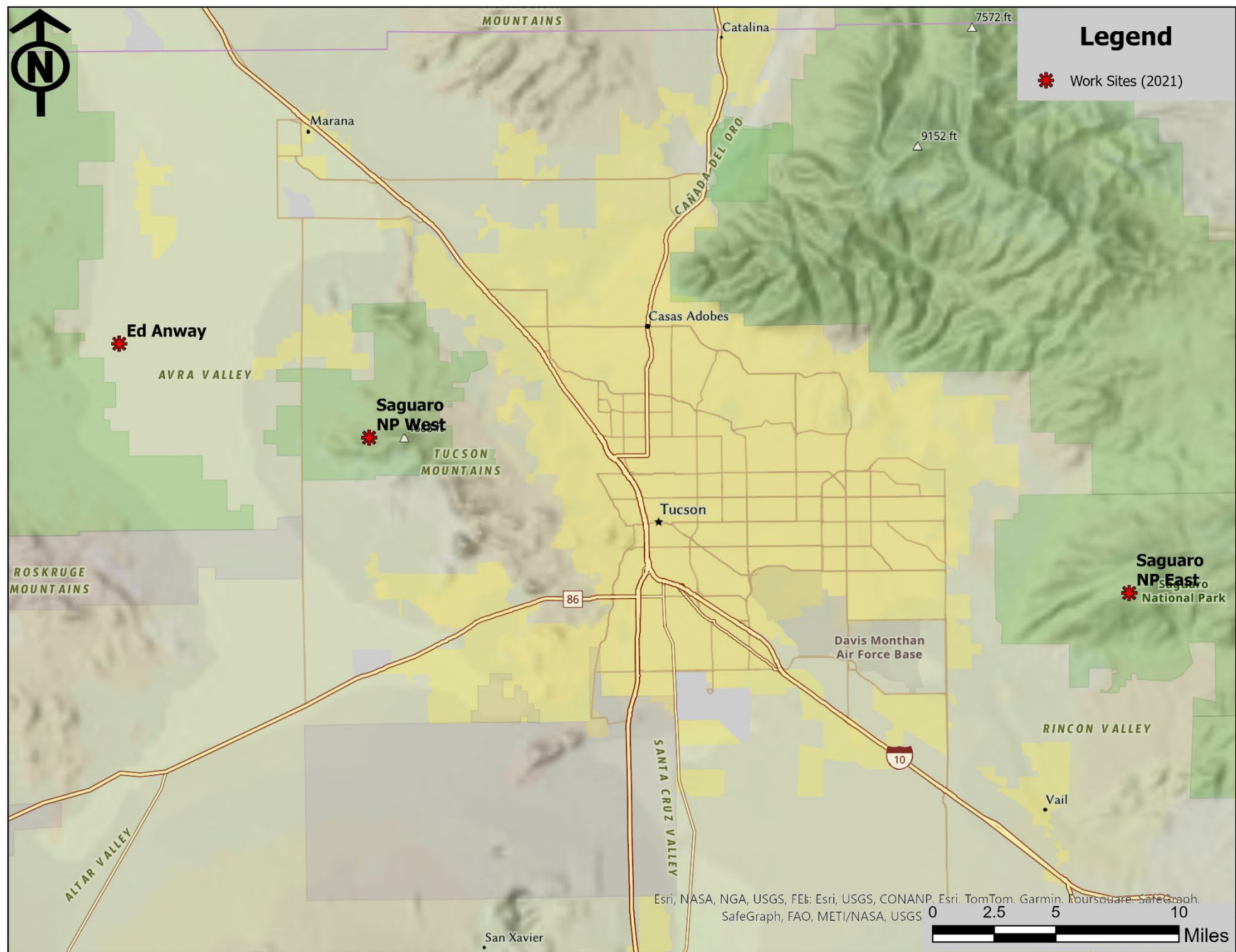


Figure 2. All Desert Fence Busters Work Sites (2021).

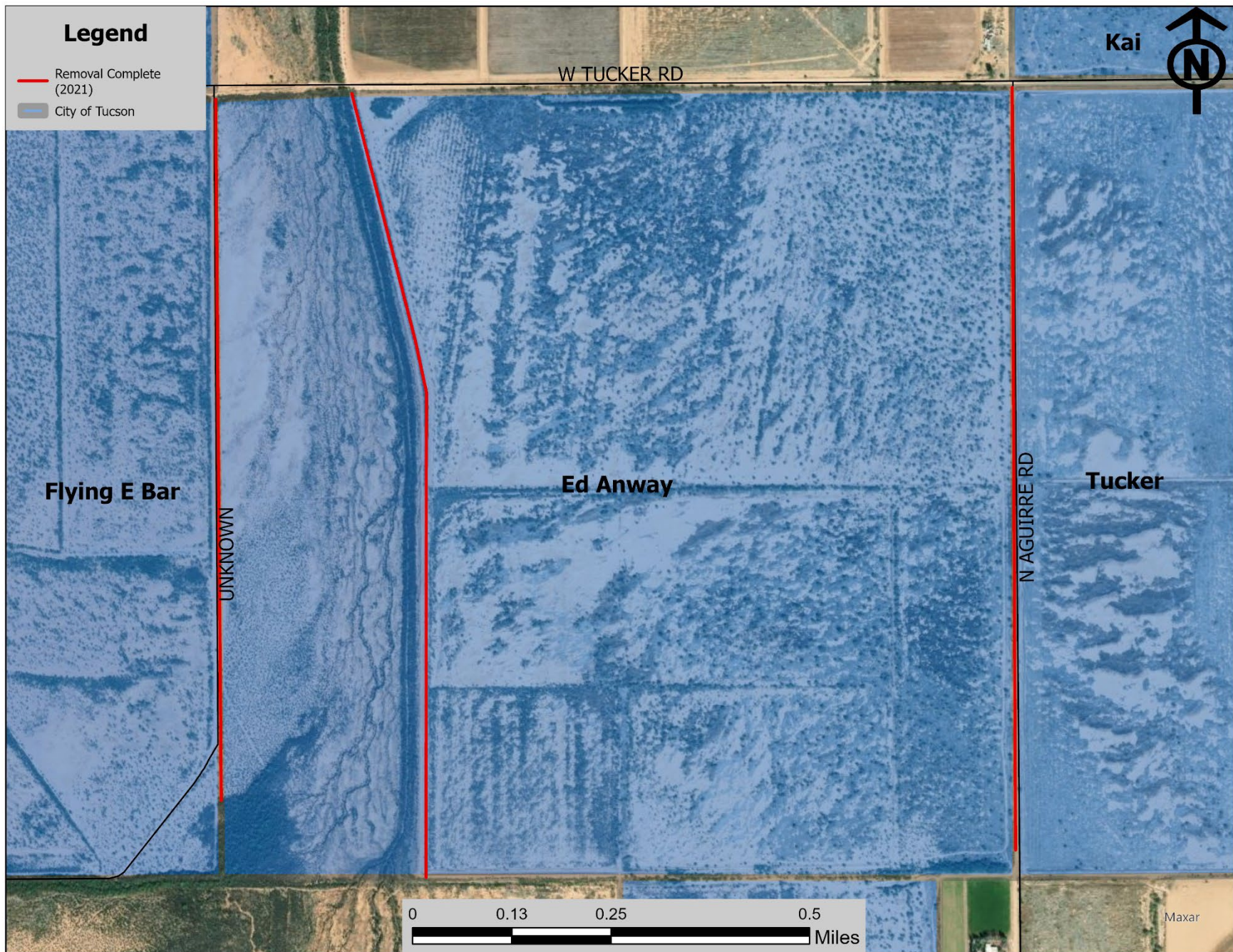


Figure 3. Fences removed at Tucson Water's "Ed Anway" property in 2021.

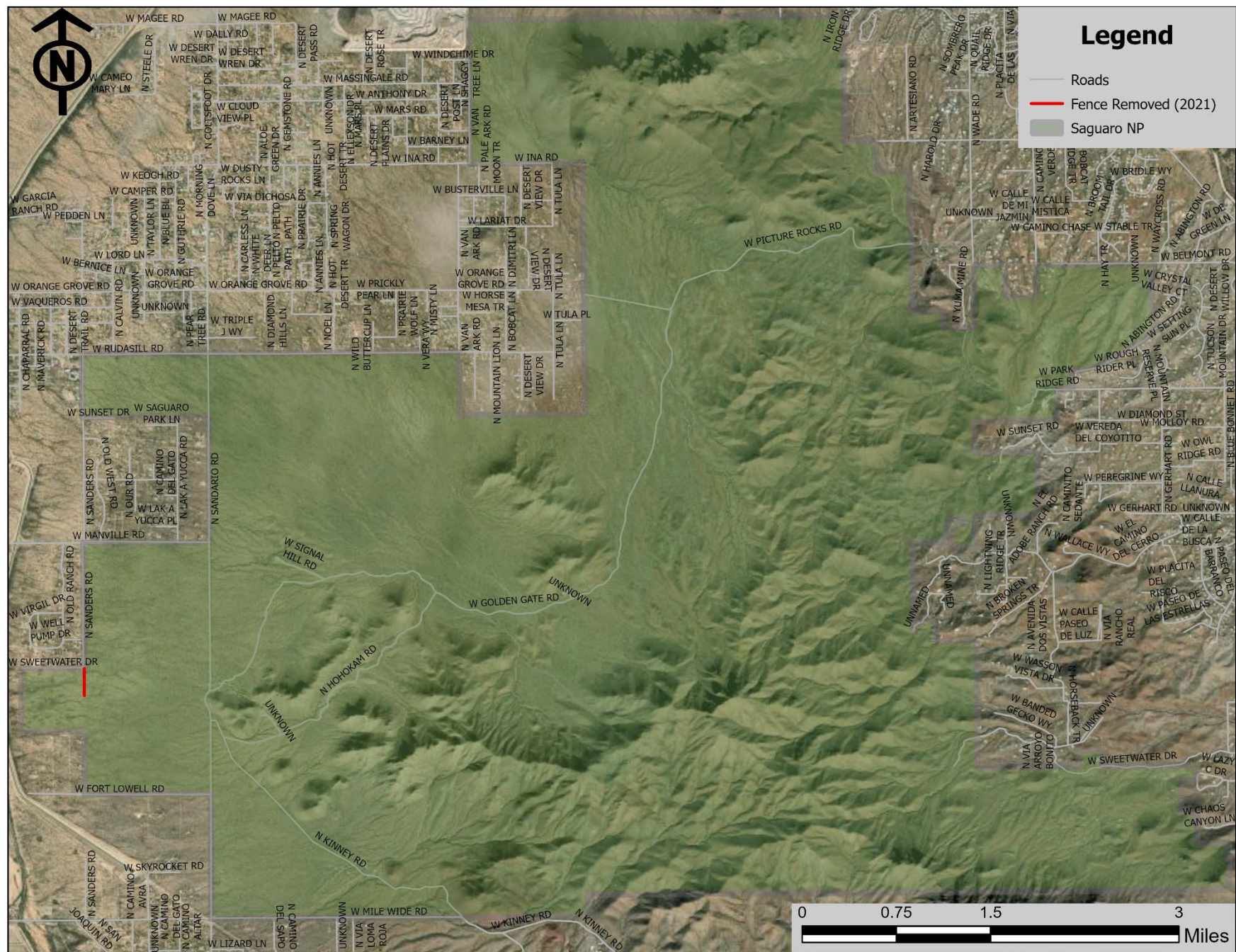


Figure 4. Fences removed at Saguaro NP, Tucson Mountain District in 2021.

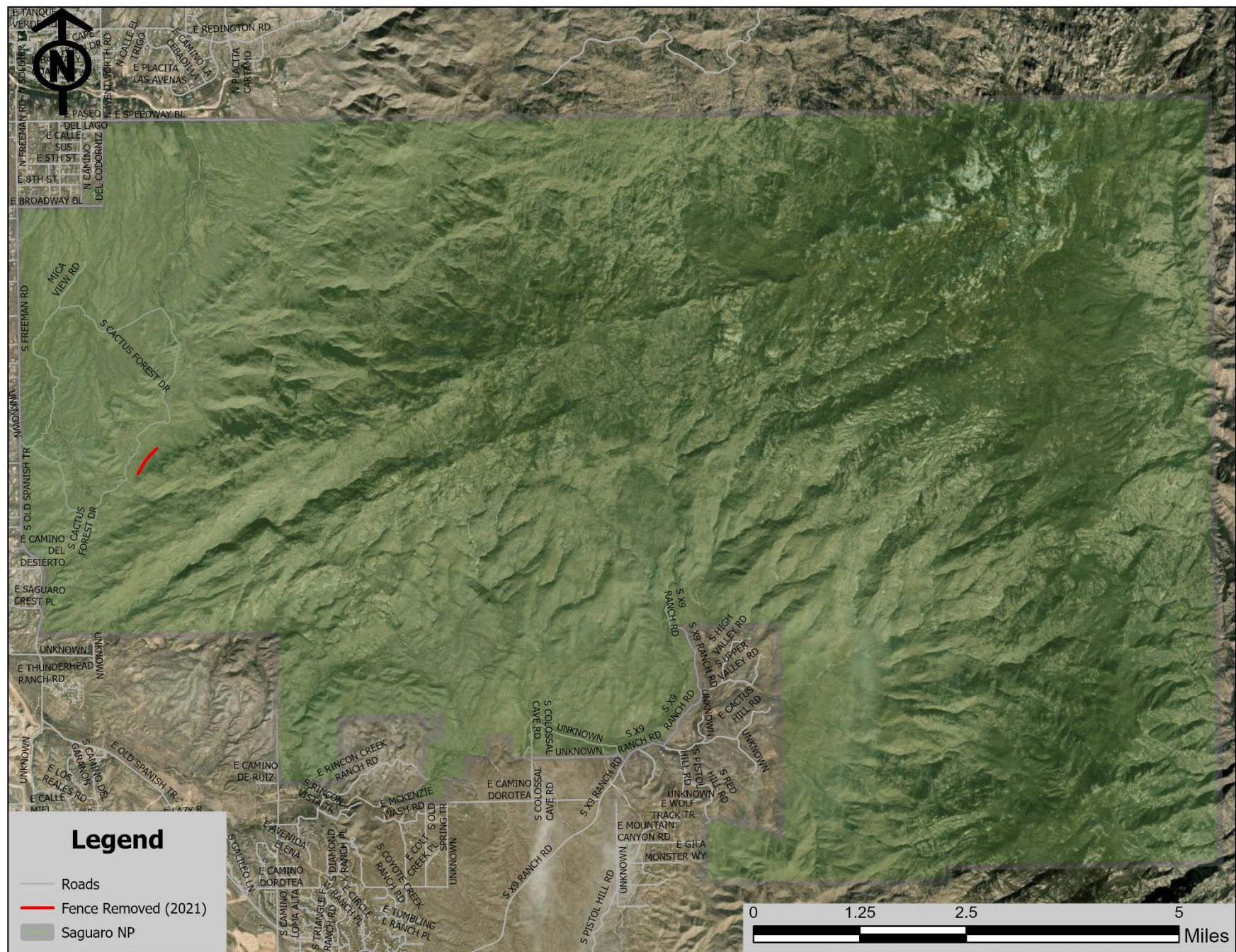


Figure 5. Fences removed at Saguaro NP, Rincon Mountain District in 2021.