



# Desert Fence Busters

Annual Report: Jan-Dec 2022

## 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

## 2022 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In 2022, the Desert Fence Busters continued to get organized by identifying the extent of obsolete fences in the Avra Valley, Altar Valley, and the Tucson Mountains-Catalina Mountains Corridor. The group continued to expand its network of partnerships with agencies and landowners to identify and remove obsolete fences with volunteer labor. The group began to identify “double fences” as particularly difficult for deer and other species to cross, and target these fences as the highest priority for removal. Fencing was removed from three jurisdictions in 2022: *City of Tucson (Tucson Water), Pima County, and the National Park Service.*

*Table 1. Summary of Desert Fence Busters’ Accomplishment (2021-2022).*

	2021	2022	TOTAL
<b>Events</b>	1	6	7
<b>Jurisdictions</b>	1	3	3
<b>Number of Volunteers</b>	71	246	317
<b>Volunteer Hours</b>	445	1,987	2,432
<b>Miles of Fence Removed</b>	3.4	21.6	25.0
<b>Weight of Fence Removed</b>	4,180	18,180	22,360
<b>Scrap Value of Fence Removed</b>	\$251	\$1,460	\$1,711
<b>Value of Volunteer Hours<sup>1</sup></b>	\$7,062	\$31,534	\$38,596

<sup>1</sup> Median hourly wage from US Bureau of Labor Statistics for “Farmworkers and Laborers” in Tucson area: \$15.87



## PHOTOS



Figure 1. A mule deer entangled in a “double fence”(top left; photo credit: Desert Fence Busters); and volunteers at work (photo credits: Dale Turner).





Figure 2. All Desert Fence Busters Work Sites (2021-2022).



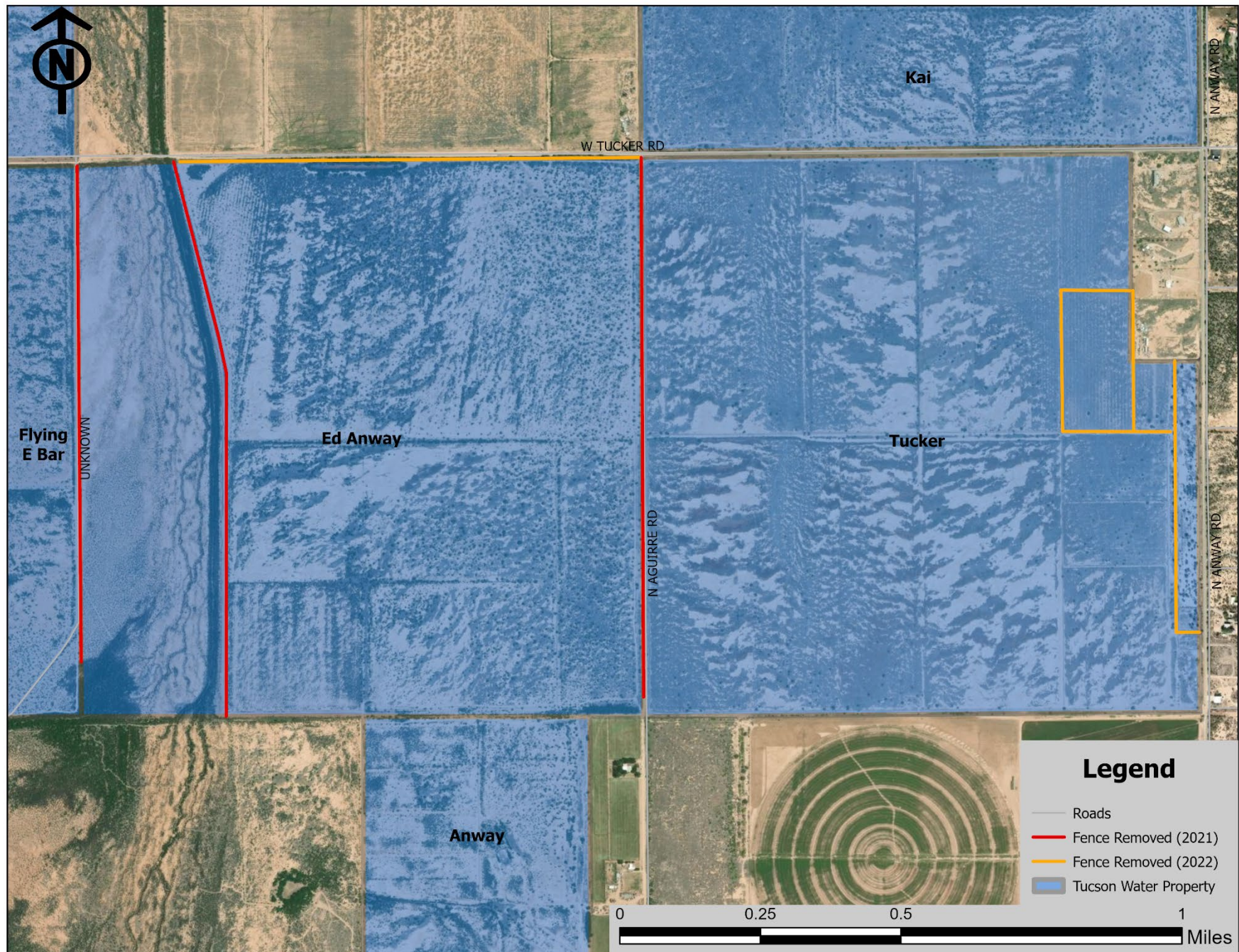


Figure 3. Obsolete fences removed in the Avra Valley by the Desert Fence Busters (2021-2022).



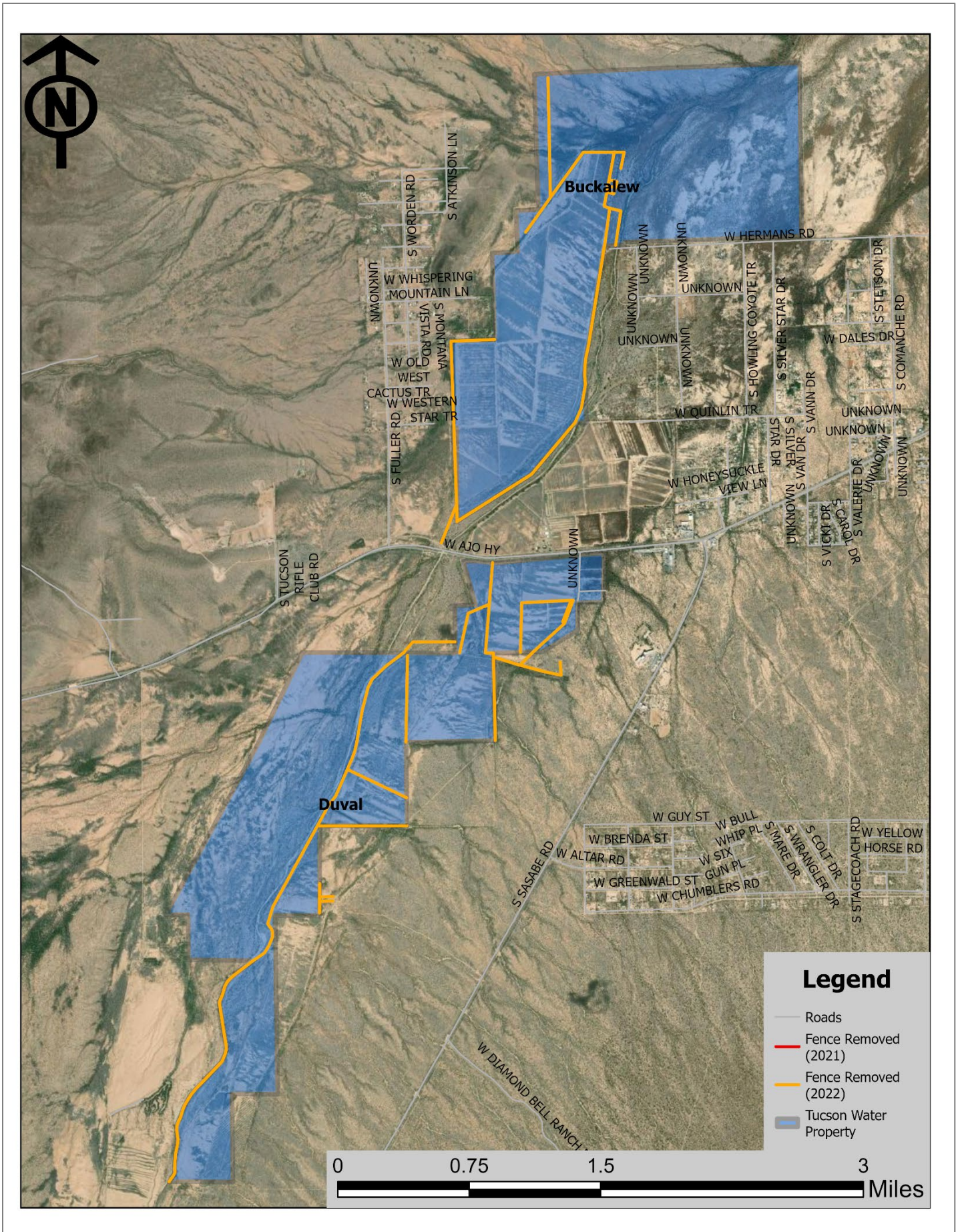


Figure 4. Obsolete fences removed in the Altar Valley by the Desert Fence Busters (2021-2022).



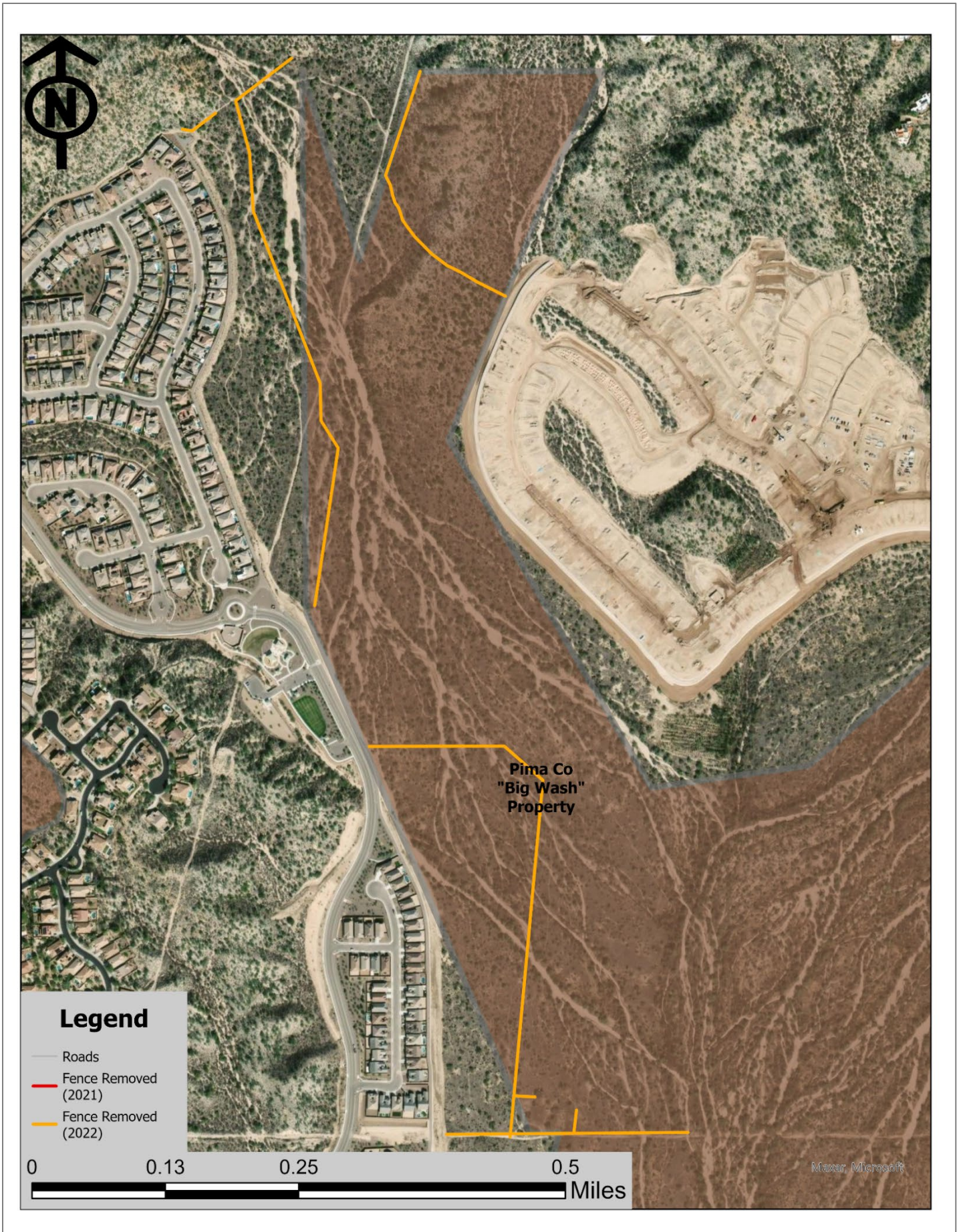


Figure 5. Obsolete fences removed from Pima County's "Big Wash" property (within the Tucson-Catalina Mountains Wildlife Corridor) by the Desert Fence Busters (2021- 2022).







