



Altar Valley Conservation Alliance

2016 ANNUAL REPORT



Conserving the Altar Valley for future generations

DEAR FRIENDS,

2016 marked the Altar Valley Conservation Alliance's 21st year of collaborative work to conserve the Altar Valley for future generations. Highlights from the year include major watershed work supported by both the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the Freeport-McMoRan Foundation, significant developments with Pima County, and the launching of our first full-time staffer: Conservation and Science Coordinator Kyle Thompson, which is a major milestone for the collective Altar Valley watershed partnership. We are proud that the Altar Valley Conservation Alliance (AVCA) is known as an exemplary collaborative conservation organization and would like to extend our gratitude to you, our Partners and supporting Stewards, without whom this work would not be possible. We especially thank all of the partners who actively participate in our biannual fire coordination meetings begun in 2012 and the new Watershed Working Group convened in January 2016.

On October 13, 2016, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service signed the Pima County Multi-Species Conservation Plan (MSCP) Permit and on October 18, 2016, the Pima County Board of Supervisors placed restrictive covenants, similar to deed restrictions, on 23,369 acres of Altar

Valley land owned by Pima County, which are further associated with 75,758 acres of grazing leases in the valley. This achievement is the capstone of 18 years of work to develop a regional plan to address the long-term conservation of Pima County's natural and cultural resources. Why is this a big deal? As described on page 72 of the MSCP, Pima County views ranch conservation as a "critical element" to conserving what remains of Pima County's last undeveloped and otherwise unprotected natural landscapes.

When Altar Valley ranchers gathered in the fall of 1995, they were drawn together by the desire to return fire to the landscape as a grassland enhancement tool and the goal of keeping the valley open and undeveloped. At that time, the term collaboration was not part of day-to-day

conversation. Collaboration involves parties working together to accomplish a shared goal. There's also an interesting secondary definition that speaks to the idea of helping an adversary. Both of these definitions resonate here in the Altar Valley, in that much of our work has involved finding common ground and facilitating interaction between parties that do not naturally work together – namely ranchers and regulators! How have we done this? We've brought people and organizations together to do on-the-ground conservation work at eight conservation action sites to design, build, and learn from erosion control and prescribed fire projects. Over the past 3 years, AVCA has leveraged a \$382,000 grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation into over \$1.1 million of partner match contributions, thus tripling the value of the foundation's investment. These statistics speak strongly of the power of partnership!

With success comes added responsibility - your role as a Partner or supporting Steward is thus ever more important. Together we have built a positive, action-oriented watershed conservation program here in the Altar Valley, and together we can continue to nurture the seeds of collaboration within the valley, as well

as inspire other watershed communities to take action. Your financial support remains critical to our success, and we hope you will consider the Altar Valley Conservation Alliance for a year-end gift and recruit a friend or two to join the team.

Wishing you a happy holiday season on behalf of the Altar Valley Conservation Alliance Board of Directors, its Science Advisory Board and its staff!

With thanks,



Mary Miller, Executive Director

WELCOME KYLE

The Alliance is excited to announce that we've hired our first full-time employee: Kyle Thompson, Conservation and Science Coordinator!

Kyle just finished his time as a Graduate Assistant/Master's Student at the University of Arizona. His program of study focused on using game cameras and occupancy modeling to determine what influences the seasonal distribution of wildlife in the sky islands of southern Arizona. Kyle earned a B.S. in Applied Biological Sciences with a concentration in Wildlife and Restoration Ecology in 2012 from Arizona State University. He has held previous jobs with a number of agencies including the Arizona Game and Fish Department, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, and USDA APHIS. Kyle has worked with several non-profit organizations, including serving on the boards of Primero Conservation and the Fishing Cat Conservancy and is currently the corresponding editor for the Wild Felid Monitor.



The hiring of Kyle as AVCA's full-time Conservation and Science Coordinator is a major milestone for the collective Altar Valley watershed partnership. Kyle joined the Alliance team part-time in January 2016, while he worked concurrently to finish up his master's program. The Alliance has been thrilled to have him on board full time since June 13th! This summer, Kyle Thompson has spent much of his time out in the valley talking with landowners about conservation project concepts and mapping accomplishments to date. As our full-time staff member, Kyle is rapidly becoming the go-to person for planning and coordinating and handling the Alliance's involvement in both projects and science in the community. Kyle's wildlife training at Arizona State University and the University of Arizona promises to help forge even stronger bonds with partner organizations and scientists, and help us design projects that respond to wildlife habitat and agricultural needs. We hope you'll give him a warm welcome!

THE ALLIANCE'S MISSION AND VISION

The Altar Valley Conservation Alliance is a collaborative conservation organization founded in 1995, and incorporated as a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization.

THE ALLIANCE'S MISSION STATEMENT:

We work through a strongly collaborative, science-based, community driven and integrated approach to:

- **CONSERVE** healthy and productive working landscapes, including soil and water conservation, wildfire management, habitat conservation and protection of native species, and other environmental initiatives.
- **PROMOTE** a thriving agricultural economy by encouraging improved ranching and farming practices, diversification and innovation, and by supporting programs and policies that support more effective, long-term economic development.
- **SUSTAIN** a resilient rural community by retaining and renewing the cultural and historical traditions of the Altar Valley.

THE ALLIANCE'S VISION:

Ranchers and other agriculturalists work effectively with our partners to conserve healthy and productive working landscapes, promote a thriving agricultural economy, and sustain a resilient rural community enriched by the culture and history of the Altar Valley.



ALTAR VALLEY CONSERVATION ACTION SITES



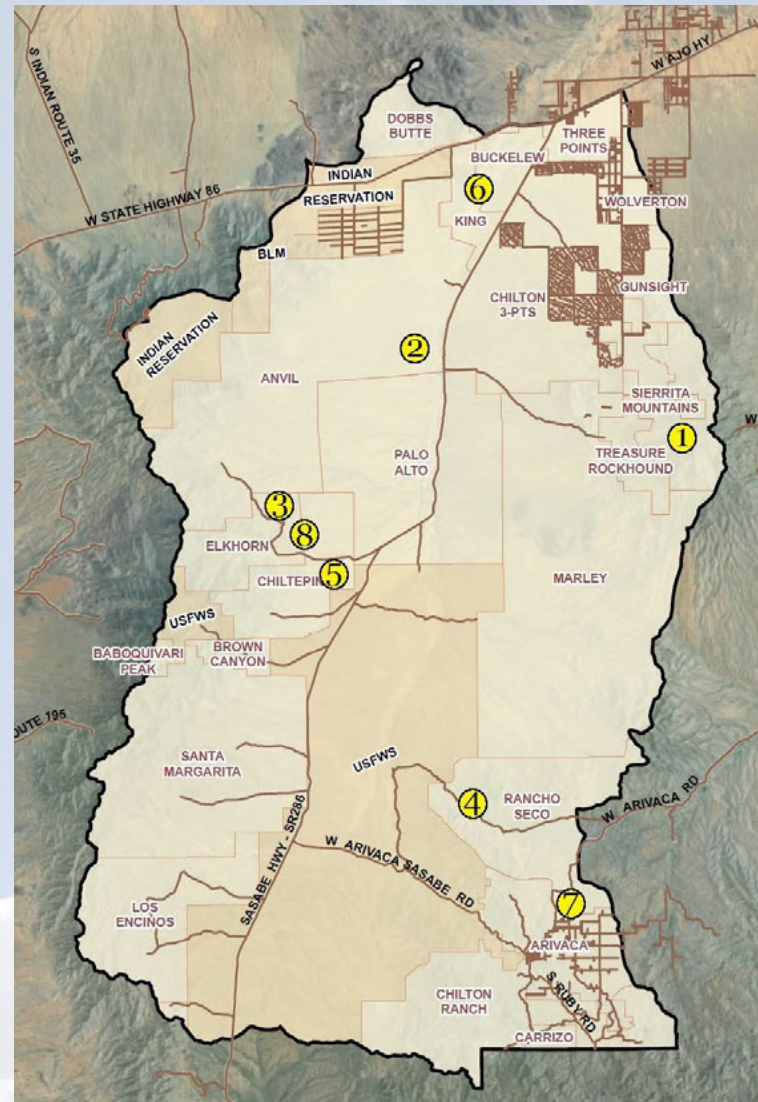
Site 1) Keystone Peak: The site, on Sierrita Mining & Ranching Co. land, has a prescribed fire plan and the environmental review by the Bureau of Land Management is almost complete and ready to submit for funding, with anticipated implementation in 2018, if conditions allow.



Site 2) West Mill: The site, on the King's Anvil Ranch, includes a watershed work of road drains installed in 2014, and a prescribed fire plan ready for implementation when conditions, resources, and insurance carriers allow. A study on Pima pineapple cactus is also in place at the site.



Site 3) Pig Mountain: The site, on the Elkhorn Ranch, has a prescribed fire plan ready for implementation when conditions, resources, and insurance carriers allow.



Site Number	Site Name	F	W
1	Keystone Peak	F	W
2	West Mill	F	W
3	Pig Mountain	F	W
4	Rancho Seco	F	W
5	Las Delicias	F	W
6	Northern Altar Wash Area	F	W
7	Noon Ranch	F	W
8	Elkhorn/Las Delicias Demonstration Project	F	W

KEY

- F = Fire
- W = Watershed Enhancement
- = Plan in progress
- = On hold
- = Complete
- = No plan intended

Other on-the-ground work in 2016 included the use of the Alliance's KM/Sierrita Pipeline Endowment to hire JE Fuller Hydrology & Geomorphology, Inc. to conduct a technical assessment of the Altar Wash, which runs south-north through the heart of the valley. Further collaboration among a variety of valley partners involved planning on a landscape scale via the Watershed Working Group, biannual fire coordination meetings, individual ranches, land management agencies and the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge. The healing of the Altar Wash and its tributaries is one of the key issues around which the Alliance was founded and we are hopeful that these efforts will turn ideas into action!



Site 4) Rancho Seco: The site, on Pima County owned Rancho Seco, includes watershed restoration work using rock structures and road drains, installed spring and fall 2016. Installing rolling dips, like the one in the photo, as road drains waters a quarter to a half an acre of land using water harvested off of the road.



Site 5) Las Delicias: The site, part of the Santa Margarita Ranch, includes a 1,265 acre prescribed fire conducted in 2014 with the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge; and watershed restoration involving road drains, rock structures and returning water to alluvial fan system that was installed in 2014 and 2016.



Site 6) Northern Altar Wash Area: The site is on the Pima County owned 98 Ranch. The restoration work installed in 2016 is designed to restore grassland vegetation to retired, barren agricultural fields by using low berms to mimic the effect of watering and drying patterns in the historic Altar Wash floodplain.



Site 7) Noon Ranch: The site is on the Noon Ranch, and includes watershed restoration work installed in 2016 using rock erosion control structures in the uplands of the North Branch of the Arivaca Creek and the adjacent Sacaton grassland. There is also a burn plan for this site, which is being worked on in conjunction with the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge.



Site 8) Elkhorn/Las Delicias Demonstration Project: The watershed restoration work on the site was installed in 2012 using rock and wood erosion control structures and road drains on the Elkhorn and the Las Delicias Ranches.

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Between November 1, 2015 and October 31, 2016, the Alliance received \$16,037 in contributions. The Alliance received \$40,000 in new grant funds from Freeport McMoRan Copper & Gold Foundation and applied our multi-year National Fish & Wildlife grant to work in the field, matched by in-kind contributions and donated goods and services totaling nearly \$390,000.

ALLIANCE PARTNERS

Altar Valley School District
Arivaca Fire District
Arivaca Boys Ranch
Arizona Department of Agriculture
Arizona Game & Fish Department
Arizona Land & Water Trust
Arizona State Forestry – Tucson Division
Arizona State Land Department
BKW Farms
Bucklew Farms
Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge
Cascabel Conservation Association
Chilton Ranch
City of Tucson Water Department
Commotion Studios
Coronado National Forest
Cuerca Los Ojas Foundation
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King's 98 Ranch
Larry Humphrey
Lower San Pedro Watershed Alliance
Malpai Borderlands Group
Marley Ranch
National Fish & Wildlife Foundation
Noon Ranch
Old Hayhook Ranch
Palo Alto Ranch & Baboquivari Peak Ranch
Pima County Natural Resources, Parks & Recreation
Pima County Office of Sustainability & Conservation
Pima County Regional Flood Control District

Pima Natural Resource Conservation District
Quiet Creek Unmanned Aerial Mapping
Quivira Coalition
Rainwater Harvesting for Drylands & Beyond
Rancho Santa Lucia
Rancho Seco
Rangeland Hands, Inc.
Robert Schmalzel
Robinett Rangeland Resources
Santa Margarita Ranch
Sierrita Mining & Ranching Co.
Sky Island Alliance
Southern Arizona Rangeland Honey
Southwest Decision Resources
Stockwell Honey Company
The Nature Conservancy
Three Points Fire District
Tohono O'odham Nation Fire Department
Tucson Interagency Fire Center
Tucson Plant Materials Center
U of A CALS Communications & Technologies
U of A Little Chapel of All Nations
U of A School of Natural Resources & the Environment
U of A Southwest Center
U of A Tierra Seca Club
U of A Wildcat Research & Conservation Center
US Border Patrol
US Bureau of Land Management
USDA Agricultural Research Station SWRC
US Fish and Wildlife Service Arizona Ecological Services
US Forest Service
US Natural Resources Conservation Service
Watershed Artisans, Inc.
Westland Resources, Inc.
Zeedyk Ecological Services

ALLIANCE STEWARDS

If your name was omitted from this list or misspelled, please accept our sincere apology and notify us so that we may correct our records. These lists reflect donations, services and partnerships occurring between November 1, 2015 and October 31, 2016.

Nikolas Ackerman
Stewart Aitchison & Ann Kramer
AmazonSmile
Arizona Land & Water Trust
Walter D. Armer
Kerry Baldwin
Antony & Amy Barton
David Brown
Boris Bauer
Arnold & Korena Byam
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Faya Ellen Causey
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www.altarvalleyconservation.org