

This land is your land

40 years of
voter-supported
conservation



PIMA COUNTY



Pima County owns and
manages mountain
parks and other
conservation areas
throughout the region

Old Hayhook Ranch

Your tax dollars at work!

Many years ago, I started volunteering with the Tucson Cactus and Succulent Society Cactus Rescue Crew as a way to save just a little of the desert. Many of us do our small part to conserve the environment and for some it's not so small. Since 2008, 18 property owners have generously donated to Pima County over 2,400 acres of important natural areas valued at almost \$13 million. All these individual efforts, big and small, are multiplied when a portion of tax revenue from all taxpayers of Pima County is directed at a particular effort. That is what happened after four successful bond elections between 1974 and 2004. Voters approved over \$230 million in bond funding for land conservation. As a result, we were able to work with partner organizations, under the guidance of citizen committees and with the support of the Board, to purchase some of the very best of Pima County.



Over the years, the County's reasons for conserving important natural areas have grown. After the Federal government's listing of the cactus ferruginous pygmy owl as endangered in the late 1990s, the future of Pima County's development of roads and other public facilities, as well as private development projects, became uncertain. But the County and the community responded by embarking on what would become a new trajectory for both conservation and development. Through the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan, a successful 2004 bond election and our recently issued federal permit, Pima County's mountain parks and conservation areas have become a way to achieve multiple conservation goals, including the streamlining of endangered species compliance for public and private development projects.

The 2004 bond election also included, for the first time, funding to purchase land to prevent urban encroachment of Davis-Monthan Air Force Base; protecting the viability of the base and, ultimately, jobs. The variety of purposes for which we have invested in land conservation reflects the needs of a healthy and growing community, including the need for a diverse and robust economy.

In 2014, 40 years after the 1974 bond election, we used the last of the 2004 bond funds to purchase the Painted Hills property, achieving a long-awaited conservation victory in the eastern foothills of the Tucson mountains. The best way to celebrate these accomplishments is to get out and enjoy all that our Pima County parks and conservation areas have to offer. I hope the following pages inspire you to do just that.

Chuck Huckelberry
Pima County Administrator

Overview

Part of what makes Pima County so special is the balance we strike between nature and development, as well as the variety of natural parks, historic properties, and outdoor recreation areas within easy reach of the metropolitan area. Our land conservation story dates back to the creation of Tucson Mountain Park in 1929, the northern half of which would later become Saguaro National Park. However, it was voter support in 1974 for the acquisition of land for what would later become Catalina State Park that really kicked off using bond funds as a long-term funding source for land conservation throughout the region.

As a result of four separate elections, voters tasked Pima County with spending a combination of over \$230 million to conserve our most valued natural and cultural resources. These bonds were sold over time and are repaid with property taxes.

By the numbers

40 years

of acquisitions (1974-2014)

\$230 million

in voter-approved bonds

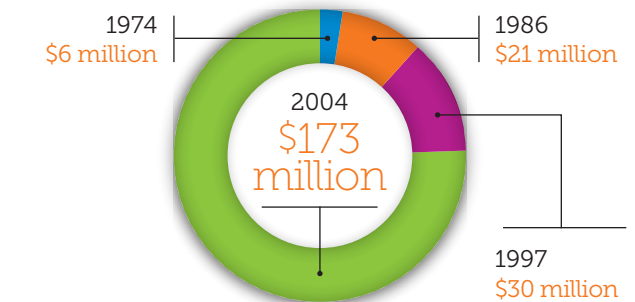
70,000

acres acquired

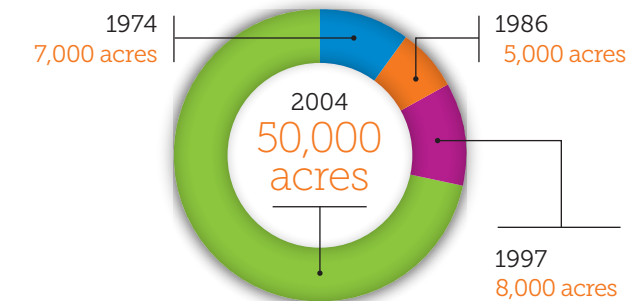
Pima County takes a conservative approach to debt management, which is reflected in our superior credit ratings. Our bonds are sold with no more than a 15-year payback, which is shorter than typical for municipal bonds.

During each of these elections, more than one ballot question included funding for land conservation. Ballot question titles have varied to reflect the types of benefits land conservation provides: parks and recreation; greenbelts; open space; habitat protection; historic preservation; and flood control. Some of these questions also included funding for park improvements, historic building restoration and flood control improvements. The \$230 million was approved for the more traditional land conservation activities. To date, this \$230 million has resulted in the County's acquisition of over 70,000 acres.

Bonds authorized



Acres purchased





Painted Hills and Tumamoc Hill

The highlights

Pima County's mountain parks and other conservation areas complement a regional network of parklands that include local, state and national parks, forests, monuments and conservation areas. Properties purchased with voter-approved bonds have resulted in a diversity of new and expanded parks and conservation areas, some of which include:

- **Tucson Mountain Park, Tortolita Mountain Park and Colossal Cave Mountain Park** - conserving mountain ranges for wildlife and outdoor recreation
- **Sweetwater Preserve and Feliz Paseos Park** - adding many miles of new hiking, biking and multi-use trails
- **Cienega Creek Natural Preserve and Agua Caliente Park** - conserving flowing water and hot springs
- **Los Morteros and Canoa Ranch conservation parks** - preserving historic and archaeological sites
- **Buckelew Farm and numerous working ranches** - protecting unfragmented open spaces and traditional industries.

Typically, when the County acquires a working ranch, the grazing leases on State and federal lands also are transferred to the County to be managed for conservation. This has resulted in an additional 130,000 acres being managed as part of these ranches. County-owned ranches continue to be operated as working cattle ranches under agreements whereby ranchers provide on the ground stewardship of the properties in return for continuing cattle operations.

The following pages highlight some of the best natural area parks and conservation areas purchased with these voter-supported funds.



Sands Ranch

Some of the most biologically diverse habitats in Pima County are found on working cattle ranches that surround the metropolitan area and buffer national, state and local conservation areas. Ranching, by its very nature, requires vast tracts of connected open space remain intact. By keeping these grasslands open, we're maintaining habitat for native plants and wildlife, protecting watersheds that feed our local acquirers, retaining outdoor recreational opportunities like hunting, and supporting a traditional agricultural industry.



The 1974 Bond Program

In 1973, the Board of Supervisors turned down a rezoning along Oracle Road and the western flanks of the Catalina Mountains after the public repeatedly opposed the project. The Board then created the Oracle Road Greenbelt Committee, made up of federal, state, county, city and citizen representatives, to instead recommend ways to preserve the land. The committee's final recommendations included a 1974 bond election to acquire the land for a future park – later to become part of Catalina State Park. The voter-ballot also included funding under a separate question for expansion of Tucson Mountain Park and acquisition of other natural areas to meet the future park needs of residents around the periphery of Tucson.

Highlights:

Catalina State Park

In the early 1970s, controversy over a proposal to develop a large satellite community on land known as Rancho Romero led to the creation of Catalina State Park. Voters approved bond funding to purchase the land east of Oracle Road, along the Cañada del Oro Wash. Pima County purchased 2,655 acres that later became a State park through a series of complex land exchanges. The land west of Oracle Road became the Rancho Vistoso community. In 1983, Governor Bruce Babbitt praised the long-awaited Catalina State Park as Arizona’s first “great urban park.”



Tucson Mountain Park Eastern Expansion

Between 1974 and 1985, the County added 6,900 acres to Tucson Mountain Park’s eastern boundary, the majority of it funded with 1974 bond funds. Over 2,000 acres were acquired from David and Rose Dortort. Mr. Dortort was best known for creating the TV series “Bonanza” and another series, “High Chaparral,” filmed at Old Tucson. The Dortort’s property was originally homesteaded by Sherry and Ruby Bowen in the 1930s, and the walls of their old stone house still remain. Another 2,000 acres was acquired from several private landowners. The remainder was State Trust land acquired through a complex land exchange related to Catalina State Park, and federal lands added to the park through the Recreation and Public Purposes Act. Future bond elections expanded the park to over 20,000 acres.



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Roy P. Drachman Agua Caliente Park

Originally homesteaded in the early 1870s, Agua Caliente Ranch became Tucson’s first destination resort in the 1880s because of the natural hot springs on the site. Nearly 100 years later, Pima County purchased this 100-acre property on Tucson’s northeast side in 1984 to preserve its unique natural and cultural values. The purchase was funded with 1974 and 1986 bond funds, as well as a \$200,000 donation from Roy Drachman. As a child, Drachman reportedly had fond memories of trips to the hot springs. State historic preservation grants and 1997 bond funds were later used to renovate the historic ranch house and convert it into a visitor center, which includes an art gallery exhibiting works of local artists.



Conservation by the numbers

\$6 million

in voter-approved bonds

7,000

acres acquired



The 1986 Bond Program

In response to the devastating 1983 flood, the County created the Floodprone Land Acquisition Program (FLAP) and asked voters in a 1984 bond election for funds for the acquisition of properties that later became sites for developed parks or flood control improvements. In 1986, \$20 million in bond funds were included for FLAP, of which more than half was spent on acquiring floodprone properties that became conservation areas. The Cienega Creek Natural Preserve was the most significant conservation area to be created with this funding source. Pima County's Regional Flood Control District levies a separate tax that supplements bond funds for this program. The voter-ballot also included funding under a separate question for the acquisition of mountain park properties and other natural areas.

Highlights:

Colossal Cave Mountain Park

Although public tours of Colossal Cave date back to 1913, the cave and much of its surroundings were State Trust land until 1992. The County leased 495-acres from the State from 1944 to 1992 for park purposes, following construction of a visitor center and cave trails by the Civilian Conservation Corps. The County then acquired the property, as well as an additional 720 acres of State Trust land. Three years prior, the Pima County Flood Control District acquired 470 acres of the adjacent Posta Quemada Ranch and 116 acres from the Green Fields School. Future bond elections further expanded the park.



Cienega Creek Natural Preserve

In 1986, Pima County established the Cienega Creek Natural Preserve, which protects over 12 miles of the lower creek, including one of the few remaining perennial streams in the County. The County used 1986 bonds for floodprone land acquisition to fund the initial land acquisitions, and 2004 bonds and other sources funded the Preserve's expansion to over 4,000 acres, which now connects to Colossal Cave Mountain Park and the County's Bar V Ranch.



Tortolita Mountain Park

The County established this park along the Pinal/Pima county line in 1986 through an initial acquisition of 2,400 acres of private ranch property in the rugged backcountry of the mountains. The 1986 bonds also funded two subsequent acquisitions in 1988 and 1996 that added 740 acres to the park. Future bond elections and other funding sources expanded the park to over 5,700 acres, including State Trust land acquired at two auctions.



Conservation by the numbers

\$21 million

in voter-approved bonds

5,000

acres acquired



Los Morteros

The 1997 Bond Program

Voters approved funding to expand mountain parks, acquire land rich in archaeological and cultural resources, and acquire riparian areas and wetlands. The County established the Open Space Acquisition Review Committee to oversee the program. The 1997 listing of the cactus ferruginous pygmy owl as an endangered species sparked the beginning of one of the most comprehensive conservation and land use planning efforts in Pima County's history– the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan (SDCP). Many of the properties identified by the community as significant for conservation prior to the 1997 bond election were also important for conservation as part of the SDCP.

Highlights:

Feliz Paseos Park

In 1998 and 1999, Pima County purchased 50 acres of the Las Lomas Ranch in the eastern foothills of the Tucson Mountains, to create Arizona's first universally accessible park. The Trust for Public Land assisted with acquisition of the property, which historically had been part of a popular guest ranch retreat attracting movie stars, singers and other well-known people. Feliz Paseos has two miles of trails, paved and unpaved, that are accessible to all, whether on foot or in a wheelchair.



Raúl M. Grijalva Canoa Ranch Conservation Park

In the late 1990s, the Board of Supervisors considered a rezoning proposal that would have resulted in development of thousands of homes south of Green Valley, east of Interstate 10. The remaining block of lands from the historic San Ignacio de la Canoa Spanish and Mexican Land grant, several historic ranch buildings, five miles of the Santa Cruz River, and sweeping views across the valley were threatened. Instead, the Board rejected the rezoning, and with the assistance of the Arizona Open Land Trust (now Arizona Land and Water Trust), purchased 4,700 acres.



Robles Pass Unit of Tucson Mountain Park

In 1999, private landowners Lloyd Perper and Kelley Rollings worked with the Arizona Open Land Trust (now Arizona Land and Water Trust) to sell 750 acres south of Ajo Highway to Pima County to add to Tucson Mountain Park. This acquisition, as well as another 300 acres acquired later with 2004 bonds funds, now make up the Robles Pass unit of Tucson Mountain Park. Over 16 miles of trails are available to hikers, mountain bikers and other trails users within this area, with connections under Ajo Highway to the rest of Tucson Mountain Park and the City of Tucson's Kennedy Park.



Conservation by the numbers

\$30 million

in voter-approved bonds

8,000

acres acquired



The 2004 Bond Program

In the late 1990s, conflict between development and federal endangered species requirements ignited a broad-based community planning effort led by Pima County to comprehensively identify our most important natural areas, and to provide certainty about where our region should grow. This effort culminated in the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan (SDCP) and the Conservation Lands System (CLS) map that identifies areas most suitable for conservation. In 2003, the SDCP steering committee recommended that private developers not shoulder a disproportionate cost of achieving these conservation goals, and that the County hold a bond election to ask voters to approve bonds for the purposes of purchasing priority lands within the CLS called Habitat Protection Priorities. In 2004, voters tasked the County with acquiring these Habitat Protection Priorities, as well as community open space inside and outside cities and towns. The citizen Conservation Acquisition Commission was appointed to oversee the program and no acquisition would be considered by the Board of Supervisors unless it had been recommended by the Commission. Voters also approved funding for the acquisition of culturally important properties and floodprone lands.

Highlights:

Sweetwater Preserve

This park, located in the foothills of the Tucson Mountains between Sweetwater Road and Camino del Cerro, was one of the first properties purchased after the 2004 bond election. When neighbors heard the property was in danger of being developed, over 180 people raised \$30,000 and worked with the Trust for Public Land to secure an option to purchase the property. In 2011, the County purchased an adjacent 187 acres, bringing the total acreage to 887. This property is very popular with hikers and mountain bikers.



Rancho Seco

With the assistance of the Arizona Open Land Trust (now Arizona Land and Water Trust), the Rowley family found a way to keep working their family ranch, while Pima County protected important habitat, as well as the uplands of two relatively intact watersheds. The County acquired Rancho Seco, near Arivaca, in 2005 and it includes 10,000 acres of land in fee and 20,000 acres of State and federal grazing leases. Today, the Rowley's manage the ranch on behalf of the County, continuing their six decades of ranching tradition, and allowing the County to dedicate resources elsewhere.



Habitat at 36th and Kino

Prior to the 2004 bond election, the Tucson Audubon Society and neighbors advocated for the conservation of this 20-acre property in mid-town Tucson. The property, located near 36th Street and Kino Boulevard, is near six schools, the Quincie Douglas Recreation Center and library. It supports an unusually high number of bird species due to dense riparian vegetation associated with storm water drainage across the property. Its bird diversity, as well as its location, make it well suited for environmental education programing. The County purchased the property in 2011, and did a comprehensive clean up and made minimal improvements. Future funding will be sought for trail development, parking and ramada improvements.



Conservation by the numbers

\$173 million
in voter-approved bonds

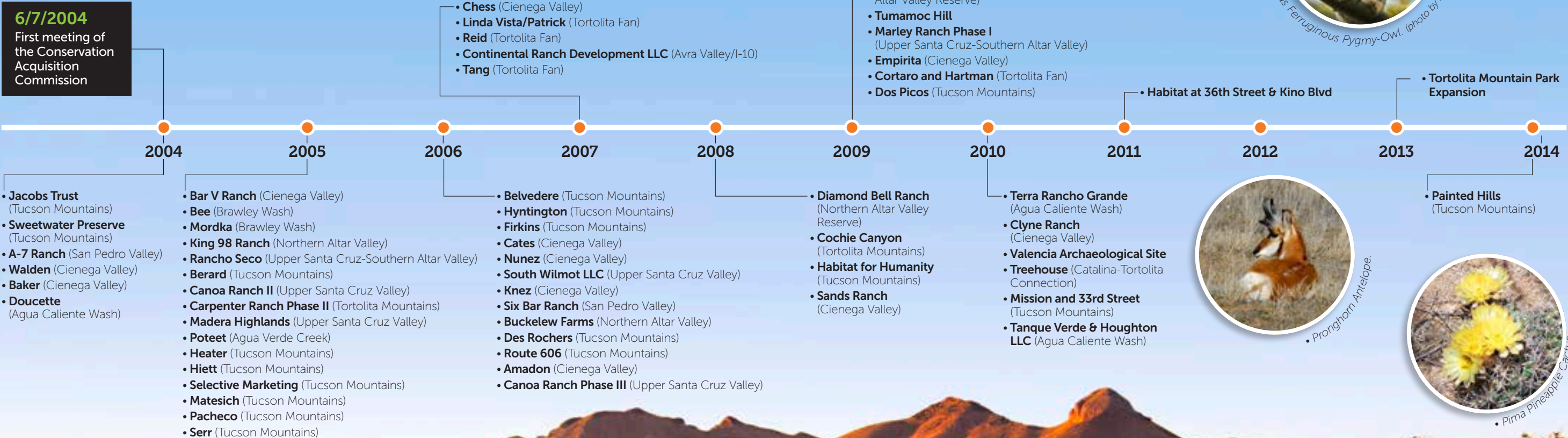
50,000
acres acquired

130,000
acres of State
and BLM grazing leases

Truth in bonding: You do get what you vote for

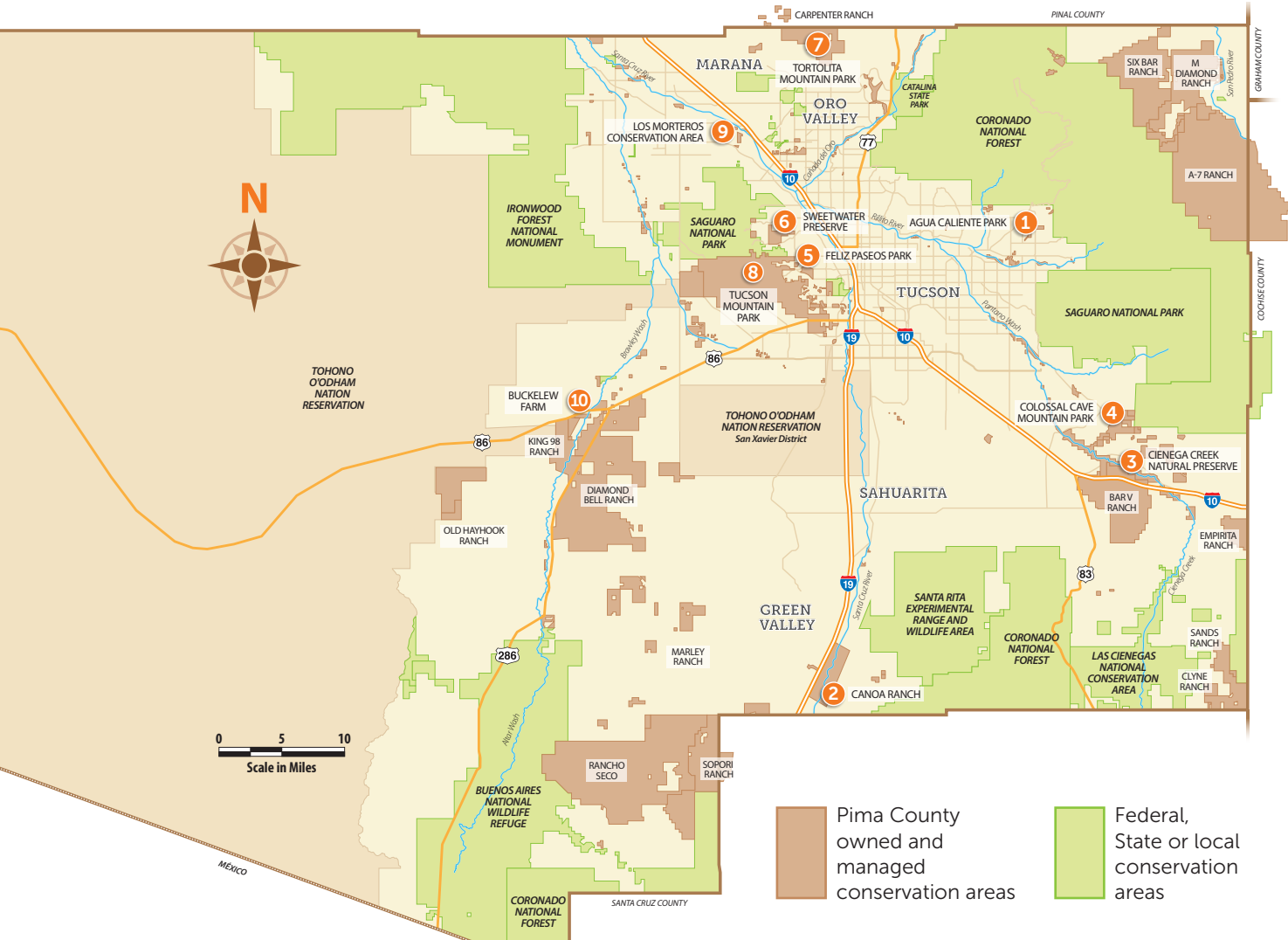
Natural areas purchased between 2004 and 2014 with voter-approved bonds

The Pima County Conservation Acquisition Commission recommended the purchase of these 59 properties. This 11-member citizen's commission oversaw the spending of the 2004 voter-approved bonds, as well as remaining funds from the 1997 bond election. A 2013 audit by the State Auditor General's office of the County's bond programs beginning with 1997, found "The County spent the proceeds in accordance with the voter-authorized purposes," "bond programs represent a uniquely collaborative effort between the County and its local jurisdictions [cities, towns and tribes]," and "Bond projects benefited citizens throughout Pima County."



Pima County's outdoor recreation destinations

Conserved all or in part with voter-approved bonds



1 Agua Caliente Park
12325 E. Roger Road
This park houses a Tucson Audubon Nature shop and is a location for Pima County Environmental Education and Interpretation programs. A spring-fed pond attracts over 200 species of birds.



2 Canoa Ranch - Raúl M. Grijalva Conservation Park
5375 S. I-19 Frontage Road, Green Valley
Join a walking tour of the historic Hacienda de la Canoa headquarters, gain insights into the fascinating stories of the people that lived and worked there, and enjoy scenic views of the Santa Cruz River Valley. Reservations required.



3 Cienega Creek Natural Preserve
Marsh Station Road, Vail
Visit this preserve for a unique experience in the Sonoran Desert. Cienega Creek runs year round and supports a diversity of plants, birds and wildlife. A permit is required for the Preserve, but not if you are accessing the Arizona Trail which crosses the preserve.



4 Colossal Cave Mountain Park
16721 E. Old Spanish Trail
This east side mountain park offers a variety of experiences including cave tours, trail rides and a restaurant. Stay the night in one of the beautiful canyon campgrounds.



5 Feliz Paseos Park
1600 North Camino de Oeste (1/2 mile north of Speedway/Gates Pass Road)
This is the first park in Arizona with a focus on universal accessibility. The park features a recreational trail system of increasing difficulty that allows those in wheel chairs to determine for themselves if they want to attempt the challenge of a particular trail. The park is intended for use by everyone, regardless of ability.



6 Sweetwater Preserve
4001 North Tortolita Road
Located east of Saguaro National Park West in the foothills of the Tucson Mountains, this property is popular with hikers and mountain bikers.



7 Tortolita Mountain Park
Access from Wild Burro Trailhead just south of the Ritz Carlton Resort at Dove Mountain.
A system of trails across Tortolita Mountain Park and adjacent State Trust land provide access to this mountain range north of Tucson. Visitors will enjoy easy-to-challenging trails, magnificent scenic views and a variety of Sonoran Desert plants and wildlife.



8 Tucson Mountain Park
West of Tucson with access at numerous trailheads.
This park is one of the most visited natural areas in the region with more than 60 miles of trails popular with hikers and mountain bikers, scenic overlooks and iconic saguaro-studded slopes. The park is also home to the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, Old Tucson, Gilbert Ray Campground and shooting/archery ranges. Dogs are not permitted except in the campground.



9 Los Morteros Conservation Area
Trailhead at Linda Vista Blvd. just east of Silverbell.
This conservation area was once a prehistoric Hohokam Village, and includes pit houses and a large oval shaped ball court. Visitors can walk along the trails and learn about the site from numerous signs along the route.



10 Buckelew Farm
17000 W. Ajo Way, at Three Points, west of Tucson
Buckelew Farm is open to the public during the popular annual fall pumpkin festival. The property includes farm land, as well as natural grasslands along the Brawley Wash and a small riparian area.



Pima County Ranches
Multiple locations
Pima County owns numerous ranches in predominantly rural areas, spanning a variety of terrain including grasslands, Sonoran Desert uplands, riparian areas, and even limestone canyons. Most of the ranches are working cattle ranches operated by private operators under agreement with the County, and include a mix of County-owned land, with grazing leases on state and federal lands. Pima County's website includes access maps to many of the ranches. Please be aware that many of the ranches have no maintained roads or public facilities. Visitors can hike, bike or take drives though the ranches, watch for wildlife, enjoy dispersed camping and be out in nature.



Note: Hunters should check Arizona Game and Fish Department's regulations for seasons and open areas.

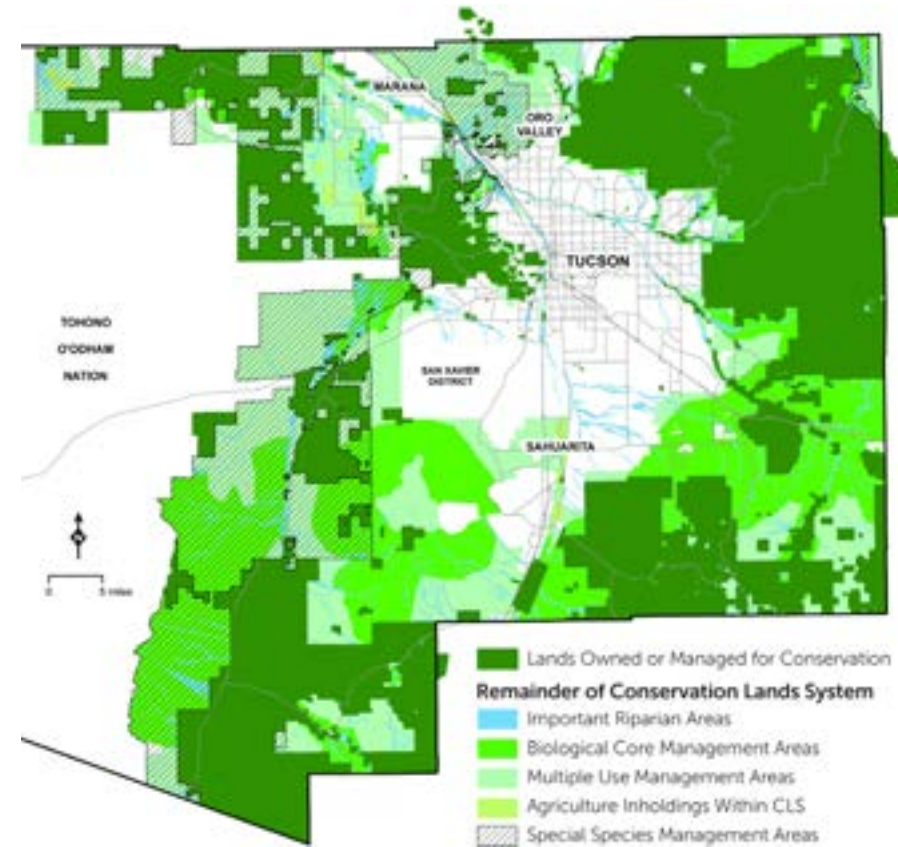
More information:
For directions, environmental education programs and more information, please visit pima.gov/parks or call 520-724-5000.

	Walking		Camping		Caving		Shooting Range		Water/Creek		Restrooms
	Hiking		Mountain Biking		Hunting		Horse Riding		Water/Pond		Information / visitors center
	Picnic		Wildlife Watching		Archery Range		Historic Site		Restaurant		ADA Accessible

Investing in a healthier urban future

Our taxpayer investment in land conservation supports a healthy and active lifestyle for our residents and visitors, while protecting the health of our natural environment. But just as important, these investments in land conservation support the health of our economy by creating jobs, enhancing home values and tax revenues, and serving as the basis for streamlining endangered species compliance for public and private development projects.

Purchasing land for conservation around the periphery of the metropolitan area also defines future growth areas suitable for urban/suburban development, contributing to a healthier tax base. When State Trust land is combined with privately owned land in Pima County,



Following the blueprint: Maeveen Marie Behan Conservation Lands System (CLS)

Integrated into Pima County's Comprehensive Plan in 2001, the CLS map represents the expertise of more than 150 members of our science community, shaped by many years of study and public input. The CLS was developed by combining areas of high biological diversity with the tenants of reserve design and configuration – bigger and connected conservation areas are better than small and isolated conservation areas, essentially creating a blueprint of where conservation and development should occur. It is used to evaluate public and private development proposals, requiring development set asides in certain situations, as well as to identify properties to purchase from willing sellers for conservation.

some 60 percent of eastern Pima County could be developed, given the mandate of the Arizona State Land Department to derive maximum revenue from its lands through sale or lease. But different planning efforts through the years, including the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan, have recognized the relationship between the cost of providing public services and proximity to already developed areas. The more that development extends into areas beyond the metropolitan core, the greater the strain on our tax base to support the increased costs of providing infrastructure and services to residents in these outlying areas.

The following pages show the variety of ways voter-approved investments in land conservation pay off for our residents, the majority of whom live in the metropolitan area.



Water

Clyne Ranch

Water is the lifeblood of the desert, not just for plants and animals but for the people, too. Preservation of large undeveloped landscapes, such as working ranches and mountain parks, protects our rivers and creeks, replenishes our groundwater, and reduces stormwater pollutants and flood damages.

- The Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management and Pima County own and manage considerable acreage in the Cienega Valley watershed, southeast of Tucson. This watershed provides **up to 20 percent** of the groundwater for the Tucson basin and is also home to two of the few Outstanding Waters of the State, Cienega Creek and Davidson Canyon, due in part to their excellent water quality.
- Purchasing floodprone land promotes public safety by reducing the potential for flood damages. Residents in unincorporated Pima County within a FEMA flood zone receive a 25 percent reduction in flood insurance premiums based in part on the purchases of floodprone lands; a total savings to residents is estimated at **\$425,000 annually**.
- As part of Pima County's Arizona Pollutant Discharge Elimination System stormwater permit from the State, the County reports the number of acres in conservation status. This is considered one of the **best management practices** implemented by the County to reduce stormwater pollutants.
- The 2004 bond program alone conserved over **190 miles of rivers and washes** throughout Pima County.



Outdoor recreation and health

Colossal Cave Mountain Park

Pima County's mountain parks, ranches and other conservation areas offer exercise and recreational opportunities such as hiking, biking, horseback riding, birding, wildlife watching, hunting, visiting cultural and historic sites, and outdoor education. These opportunities to enjoy the outdoors have been shown to promote healthier living, which can also curb rising health care costs. And they are enjoyed by local residents, as well as lots of visitors!

- In 2012, approximately **80% of Pima County residents** reported being **physically active**, which exceeded both the state and national averages.
- Over **one-third of residents** in eastern Pima County live within one mile of a County-owned mountain park or conservation area.
- Pima County owns and maintains over **140 miles of trails and 27 trailheads** in eastern Pima County.
- It is estimated that over **1.4 million** people enter Tucson Mountain Park per year to visit or use park facilities. Half of these are visitors to the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, Old Tucson and Gilbert Ray Campground, all located within the park.
- In a 2014 survey by Singletrack.com, mountain bikers voted Pima County's Sweetwater Preserve **number four in the West** for most scenic mountain bike trails.
- **95 percent** of Pima County conservation areas are open to hunting. Hunters should check the Arizona Game and Fish Department's regulations for hunting seasons and open areas.
- Pima County's natural resources environmental education program boasted almost **30,000 participants** during the 2015/2016 fiscal year.

Tourism, jobs and economic development

It's not a secret that visitors are attracted to our unique natural environment, and many of us moved here for the same reason. Travel is one of the most important industries in Arizona and relies heavily on the health of our natural environment and access to outdoor recreation. These "visits" and outdoor activities contribute significantly to our economy by supporting jobs and retail sales in the tourism and outdoor recreation industries, as well as generating tax revenue.

- In 2012, Visit Tucson found that the **top two reasons** people travel here are our natural environment and outdoor natural area recreation. Almost **60 percent** of visitors reported participating in outdoor desert activities.
- In 2014, visitors to the Tucson/Pima County region spent **\$2.2 billion**, generating **\$185 million** in tax revenue and supporting 23,000 jobs.
- In 2001, it was estimated that the economic impact associated with wildlife watching in Pima County supported **3,196 jobs** and generated **\$173.5 million** in direct retail sales, **\$90.7 million** in salaries and wages, and **\$16.6 million** in state and federal tax revenues.
- In 2002, it was estimated that hunting and fishing in Pima County supported **1,187 direct jobs** and generated **\$84.5 million** in expenditures, **\$18.3 million** in salaries and wages, and **\$5.4 million** in state tax revenues.
- During the first seven months of 2016, **87,922 visitors** to Colossal Cave Mountain Park generated **\$910,573** in revenues from cave tours, retail and food sales, and camping.
- The JW Marriott Tucson Starr Pass Resort is located along the eastern boundary of Tucson Mountain Park. In addition to annual property tax revenues of almost **\$1.9 million**, the resort and the County have a special revenue sharing agreement that generates upwards of **\$800,000 a year** for enhancement and expansion of Tucson Mountain Park.
- Quality of life factors like the unique natural areas our region has to offer, as well as access to them, make a difference in **attracting employers and a strong workforce**.

J.W. Marriott Tucson Starr Pass Resort at Tucson Mountain Park



Streamlining federal compliance for development

The overarching vision of Pima County's Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan (SDCP) is to conserve our natural and cultural resources, while logically planning for continued economic growth. The Multi-Species Conservation Plan (MSCP) is a critical tool in achieving this vision. The Endangered Species Act Section 10 permit recently issued to the County in support of our MSCP, provides opportunities to streamline compliance with endangered species regulations in a magnitude that had previously been impossible for our public and private development community. The MSCP and Section 10 permit rely on many of the conservation policies, ordinances and programs already in place thanks to the SDCP, including the suite of conservation lands purchased with voter-approved bonds in 1997 and 2004.

- County bond-funded conservation areas, plus areas acquired through other funding mechanisms and donations, serve as the mitigation lands needed to offset almost 30 years' worth of development impacts under the Section 10 permit.
- The MSCP and Section 10 permit provide regulatory certainty to development projects, as well as save time and money. While our MSCP and recently approved Section 10 permit is unique, a 2014 study of these types of plans in California found "substantial benefits to the business community, providing **millions of dollars in savings** through reduced uncertainty, time delay and compliance costs."
- It will eliminate the need for biological surveys and consultations for certain Army Corps of Engineer permits for private and public projects that may impact threatened and endangered species, which in the past have added months, if not years, to completing development projects.
- It will also eliminate the need for offsite mitigation associated with threatened and endangered species. In the past, Pima County has paid between \$5,000 and \$25,000 an acre for such federally required offsite mitigation.



Enhancing home values and tax revenues

Painted Hills

Numerous studies across the country have shown that land conservation increases the value of adjacent and nearby homes and tax revenues. Just like the size of a home or its respective school district, the closer a home is to protected natural areas is an important amenity that is often reflected in the purchase price. Homebuilders typically charge lot premiums for homes located near or adjacent to protected natural areas.

- More than **two-thirds of Arizonans** interviewed agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “If I bought a house in my community, having open space nearby would be a top priority” (Arizona State Parks 2008 SCORP).
- Almost **60 percent of land** in eastern Pima County is either privately owned and paying property taxes or is State Trust land that may be sold for development and often becomes private land via auctions. The County’s purchasing of land for conservation is often criticized for significantly reducing tax revenues by reducing the number of taxable properties. However, repeated studies show that is not true.
- Applying an acceptable range of 5 to 20 percent of added value based on studies across the country, to the 2,322 single family residences within a half mile proximity of Tucson Mountain Park, results in an estimate of **\$25 million to \$101 million** in property value added, as well as a range of **\$375,000 to \$1.5 million** in added property tax revenue. More detailed research is needed to refine the range of added value applicable to the Pima County region.

Management – Past and future

These diverse lands do not manage themselves. The lands are challenged like any natural areas are, with issues such as vandalism, irresponsible recreational use, land impacts from illegal immigration and border issues, and effects of our long-term drought and climate change. The types of management activities that have occurred on these properties have been largely determined by the property type, as well as available resources. Mountain parks close to town, require a higher level of management, maintenance and improvements due to demands for outdoor recreational opportunities, as well as issues associated with nearby urban areas. As Tucson Mountain Park expanded along its eastern boundary, new trails and trailheads were added, new park rules were put in place to better manage activities like archery hunting, road improvements were made, and studies were conducted to inform wildlife management. Working ranches, on the other hand, continue to be managed by many of the same ranchers that previously owned the property, under agreements with the County. Ranch improvements have generally included the conversion of wells to solar, more intensive landscape level environmental surveys, grazing monitoring, installing wildlife water-drinkers and working with the Arizona Game and Fish Department on access agreements and signage for hunters and outdoor recreationalists. The Sands Ranch is soon to become home to a colony of black-tailed prairie dogs and a refuge for Chiricahua leopard frogs, as the Arizona Game and Fish Department works to reestablish them in southeastern Arizona.



Buffelgrass removal – Tucson Mountain Park



Wildlife water drinker – Old Hayhook Ranch

Some of the properties acquired primarily for cultural and historic resources, like Canoa Ranch have seen significant building rehabilitation, adaptive reuse, and interpretive improvements, while others have yet to be surveyed for archaeological sites. The management of floodprone properties sometimes requires demolition of structures and hands-on vegetative management.

After the considerable wave of new properties acquired as a result of the 2004 bond election, County staff have been familiarizing themselves with these properties through research and field work. More sizeable improvements have been funded primarily with bond funds approved for those purposes, or through grants and partnerships. Over \$3 million of external grants have been generated to support management of these conservation lands. Pima County's former Parks Department has been renamed to Pima County



Camino de Oeste Trailhead work – Tucson Mountain Park

Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation (NRPR) and new positions such as a rangeland program manager, conservation biologist, natural resource specialist and environmental educators were added to the staff. We created the Office of Sustainability and Conservation, which includes staff responsible for coordinating implementation of the County's Multi-Species Conservation Plan and the protection of cultural resources, along with NRPR and the Regional Flood Control District.

These voter-supported conservation areas have created significant opportunities for our community, but also challenges. They will continue to provide many values to our community and represent a significant investment in the health of our future. In the years to come, Pima County will invite the public to join a comprehensive management planning effort for these lands. After all, these lands are your lands!



Tortolita Mountain Park



PIMA COUNTY

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