



MEMORANDUM

Date: September 24, 2014

To: The Honorable Chair and Members
Pima County Board of Supervisors

From: C.H. Huckelberry
County Administrator 

Re: **Canoa Ranch Conservation**

Given the number of inquiries the County has received regarding the future use of Canoa Ranch, I have asked the primary staff involved in acquisition and management of this resource to develop concepts for compatible, accessory or public uses of Canoa Ranch, its historic properties and how best to protect its long-term cultural and natural resources.

The attached September 16, 2014 staff memorandum is attached for your review regarding this matter. I have asked staff to review this report with the Canoa Ranch Conservation Commission and obtain their guidance and input before finalizing the document as the guidance for any secondary and/or related use requests the County may receive regarding the Canoa Ranch property.

Please contact me if you have any questions regarding this subject.

CHH/anc

Attachment



Memorandum

Date: September 16, 2014

To: C.H. Huckelberry, County Administrator

From: Linda Mayro, Director
Chris Cawein, Director, Natural Resources Parks & Recreation
Suzanne Shields, Director, Regional Flood Control District

RE: Canoa Ranch Conservation Mandate and Land-Use Constraints

As requested, this memo provides a review of discussion items of the Canoa Ranch County staff committee and how we are working to ensure that departmental interests remain complementary. This staff committee comprised of directors and staff from Natural Resources Parks & Recreation, the Regional Flood Control District, Facilities Management, and Sustainability and Conservation continues to meet quarterly regarding a variety of issues affecting Canoa Ranch. Because of overlapping departmental interests and County goals for the property, the County staff committee has been compiling, sharing and discussing any planning information for improvements and public uses of the site. Thus far, we do not anticipate any major conflicts, and we agree that the area where improvements may be considered is quite constrained given the objectives of the Canoa Ranch master plan adopted by the Board of Supervisors in 2007. Standing issues for review and ongoing discussion by the staff committee include:

1. Canoa Master Plan: Priorities and Implementation
2. NRPR Programming and Improvements
 - a. Headquarters
 - b. Pond restoration
 - c. Remote areas
 - d. Environmental education
 - e. Heritage education
 - f. Docents, volunteers
 - g. Historic preservation/ maintenance
3. NRPR - 2015 Bond project
4. Management and Business Plan, staffing, fees, O+M
5. RFCD – COE In Lieu Fee program or mitigation bank, riparian restoration
6. OSC – MSCP/ Section 10 Permit mitigation lands
7. OSC - Cultural resources protections
8. Anza National Historic Trail and public access
9. Water Rights – County, mines, FICO
10. Private sector partnership proposals/ evaluation
11. Encroachments/Easements/ Other uses - Freeport McMoRan wells and access road; Union Pacific Railroad; ADOT, Hospital and office site; TEP; Sewer

From the outset, it has been clear to the staff committee that the principles of natural and cultural resource conservation and educational programming must be observed in all our efforts to fulfill the purposes for which the Canoa Ranch property was obtained and to provide the public with authentic and accurate experiences and information. Foremost in guiding our planning efforts and actions for Canoa Ranch has been the Canoa Ranch Master Plan.

The Canoa Ranch Master Plan

The final master plan for Raul M. Grijalva Canoa Ranch Conservation Park was adopted by the Board of Supervisors on May 1, 2007. It was developed over the course of a year by Poster-Frost Associates, the Canoa Ranch Community Trust and Oversight Committee, County staff, and with considerable public input. The adopted plan is the result of a comprehensive and collaborative planning project that identifies ways to best protect, interpret, and enhance the cultural and natural resources of the 4800 acre historic Canoa Ranch that began as the 1820 Spanish and Mexican era land grant known as "*San Ignacio de la Canoa*."

Three rounds of public meetings were scheduled. The first round of public meetings was held in February of 2006 to give the community a basic level of understanding of the Canoa Ranch and to stimulate public participation in envisioning a future for the property.

The public's three most important evaluation criteria for a successful Master Plan were:

1. The experience is authentic
2. The sense of place and silence is preserved
3. The site teaches about conservation and sustainability

The preferred alternative includes preservation and restoration of the Manning period ranch headquarters for use as a Heritage Area with exhibits and programs interpreting all layers of site history. Living history and working ranch demonstrations will provide the visitor with a sense of life on the ranch. Special event programming will provide additional interpretive and educational opportunities. A small number of remote interpretive sites are planned to interpret prominent events and historical themes that have occurred in the region.

Visitor parking, a new orientation center and a new conference and dining center are proposed for the area west of the restored historic pond. The historic pond will be restored and is expected to generate considerable visitation as a "stand-alone" experience for recreational purposes, including bird watching and picnicking.

Comprehensive land restoration and resource management programs are key components of the master plan. Preserving and enhancing the natural resource values of the site are important goals, and land rehabilitation, research, and stewardship programs will provide opportunities for community participation and partnerships.

As shown in Figure 1, the Master Plan essentially defines the maximal extent of redevelopment. This area defines where new construction may occur and building improvements that are focused on the ranch headquarters. Approximately 60 acres comprise the headquarters and pond, 30 acres are leased to the equestrian center, and approximately 30 acres of fill area owned by the RFCFD will be the site of the future campground. In all, about 120 acres comprise the development limits of the Canoa Ranch site.

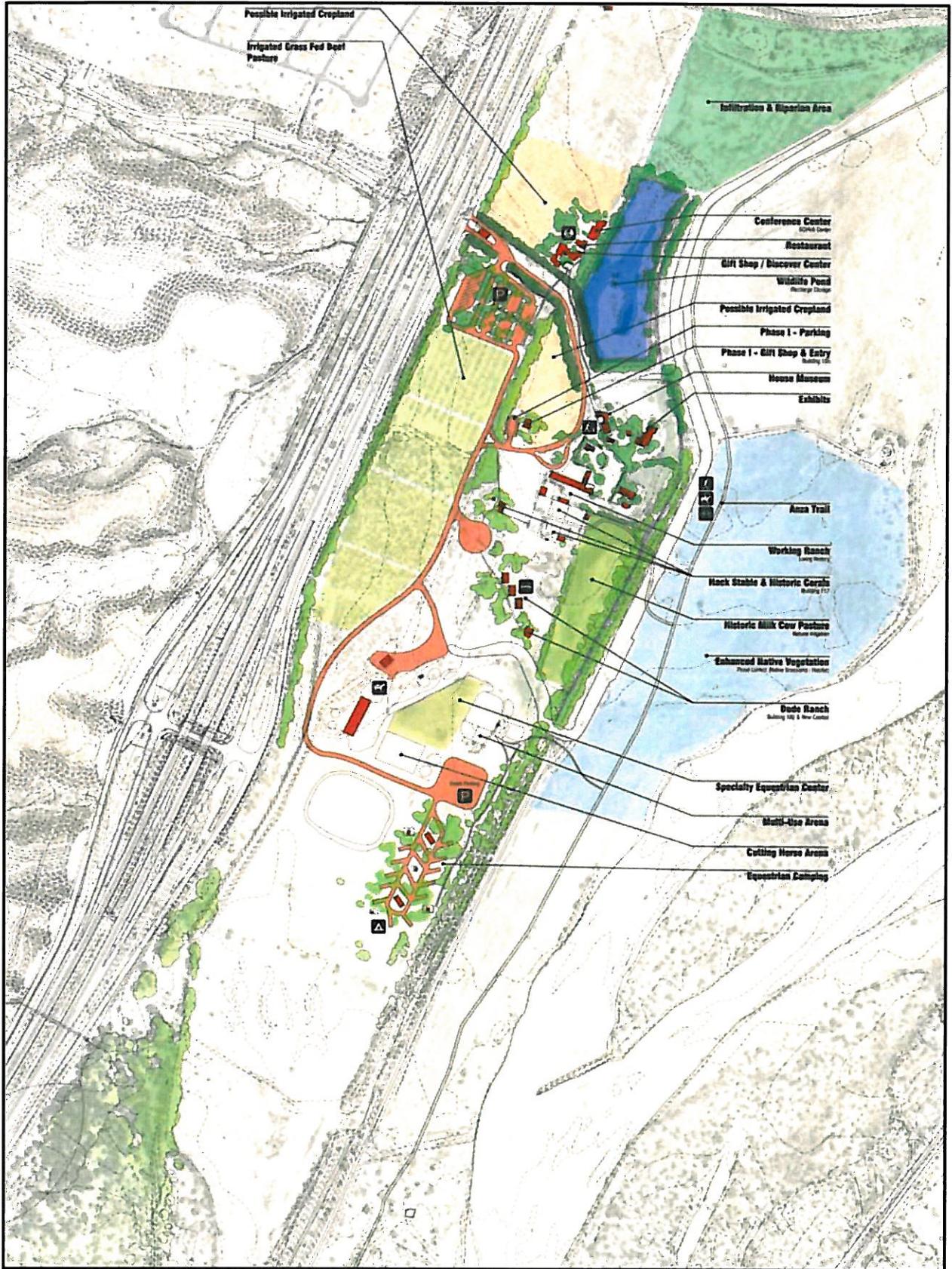


Figure 1. Canoa Ranch Master Plan of Headquarters Area 2007

Primary attractions addressed in the Master Plan and shown in Figure 1 include:

1. Orientation Center: This is the primary arrival point for visitors including an orientation museum, organized into galleries related to historic and prehistoric time periods. Beginning with a Native Peoples gallery the museum moves forward in time through the Spanish, Mexican, American Territorial, Manning, Corporate, and Conservation galleries.
2. Conference / Event / Dining / Education Center: This building would also be located north of the Orientation Center and would include an event plaza and lawn facing the pond front (buffered from parking and freeway).
3. Pond: Water front recreation is rare in the Tucson region and will be in high demand. The pond, though, will be sensitive riparian habitat and an important component of the historic setting. A balance between the public interest and preservation goals will be struck by limiting parking. A multi-use path will ring the pond and connect to the Anza trail north of the flood berm. Picnicking areas will be carefully placed along this path.
4. Heritage Area / Headquarters Complex: The setting and the exteriors of buildings within the Headquarters Complex will be restored. This will include 17 structures (adobe houses and vernacular ranch buildings), corrals, landscape, pond, canal, and (water rights willing) pasture and agricultural fields. The HQ will function as a living ranch, with tack room, blacksmiths shop, hay barn, stables, corrals, pasture and offices for the trail ride operation, ranch skills school, and heritage breeds program. The historic mesquite corrals may be lined with pipe rail panels for protection.
5. Pasture: The (10) acre pasture west of the headquarters will be used as pasture to help feed and, more importantly, display heritage cattle and other livestock breeds; this pasture will also act as a foreground landscape feature as seen from the approach along the frontage road.
6. Equestrian Center: The existing (30) acre equestrian facilities would remain in its current location and could support both a specialty equestrian training center and a special event area and arena.
7. Special event campground: At the south end of the public access area, situated in the niche between the canal, historic reservoir, and mesquite bosque is a multi-use camp site. It would be designed to accommodate equestrian trailers and intended as a camp site for Anza trail riders, both as a base camp and as an overnight stop for riders based up or down river. It would also be used as a site for overnight star gazing events, scout troops or similar group users.
8. Anza National Historic Trail: Public access is currently provided along five miles of the Canoa Ranch property to the East of the headquarters and canal and West of the Santa Cruz River. This segment of the Anza Trail provides the public with the exceptional opportunity to experience the route in a natural setting much as it was during the 1775 Anza expedition.

Remote areas to the East of the Santa Cruz River and along the Santa Cruz River floodplain will remain undeveloped to conserve the natural and cultural landscape and visual integrity of Canoa Ranch and to serve as mitigation land for the County Multi-Species Conservation Plan and to preserve the natural drainage functions and wildlife corridor from the Santa Rita Mountains to the river. Archaeological sensitivity is very high and the remaining intact portion of the original *San Ignacio de la Canoa* Spanish land grant area is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Riparian Restoration and In Lieu Fee Program or Mitigation Bank

Beginning in 2012, the Regional Flood Control District (District) and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) have been working to develop an In-Lieu Fee Program (ILF Program). This program will allow the District and a potential partner to develop and implement environmental restoration projects on lands the District has acquired through the Floodprone Land Acquisition Program. Figure 2 below shows the degraded floodplain and former agricultural land on Canoa Ranch that is just east of the Master Plan headquarters area. RFCD is currently planning for riparian restoration as an ILF area. The blue outline shows the limits of the proposed ILF and red identifies waters of the US regulated by the Corps.

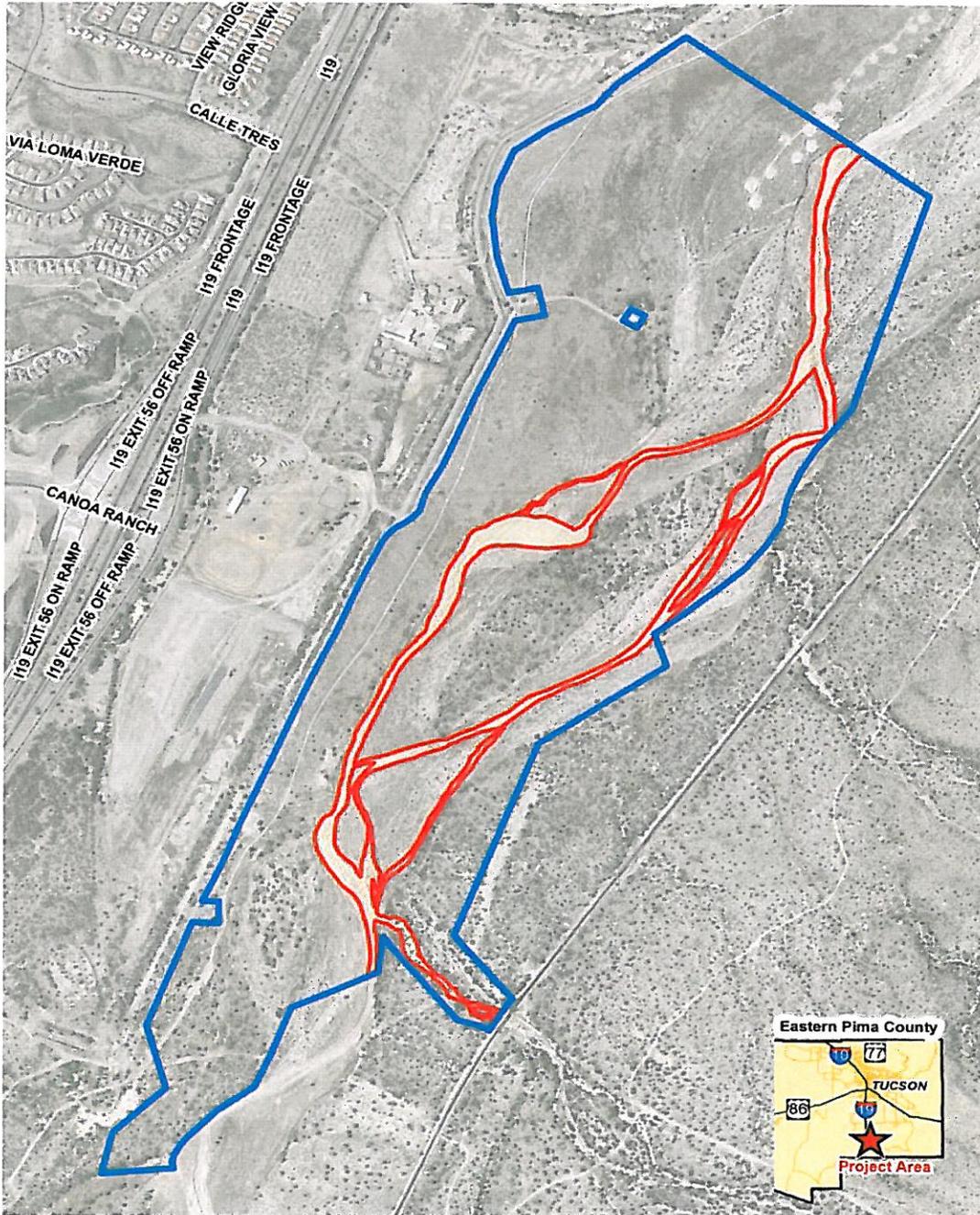


Figure 2. RFCD lands proposed as ILF restoration area.

By providing environmental restoration, this ILF Program would allow the District to fund these restoration efforts by the sale of mitigation credits to public and private entities within southern Arizona that must provide compensation to mitigate for impacts to Waters of the United States (Waters) in southern Arizona. The District has worked to develop this partnership with the Corps to ensure that mitigation funds collected for disturbance of Waters that occur in Pima County remain in Pima County for environmental mitigation. In addition the ILF Program provides an opportunity to develop environmental restoration sites that can be coordinated with activities under the County's Multi-species Conservation Plan (MSCP) and to create a consolidated network of sites and species connectivity between the riparian areas and upland areas. Figure 3 below shows a concept plan for initial restoration areas.

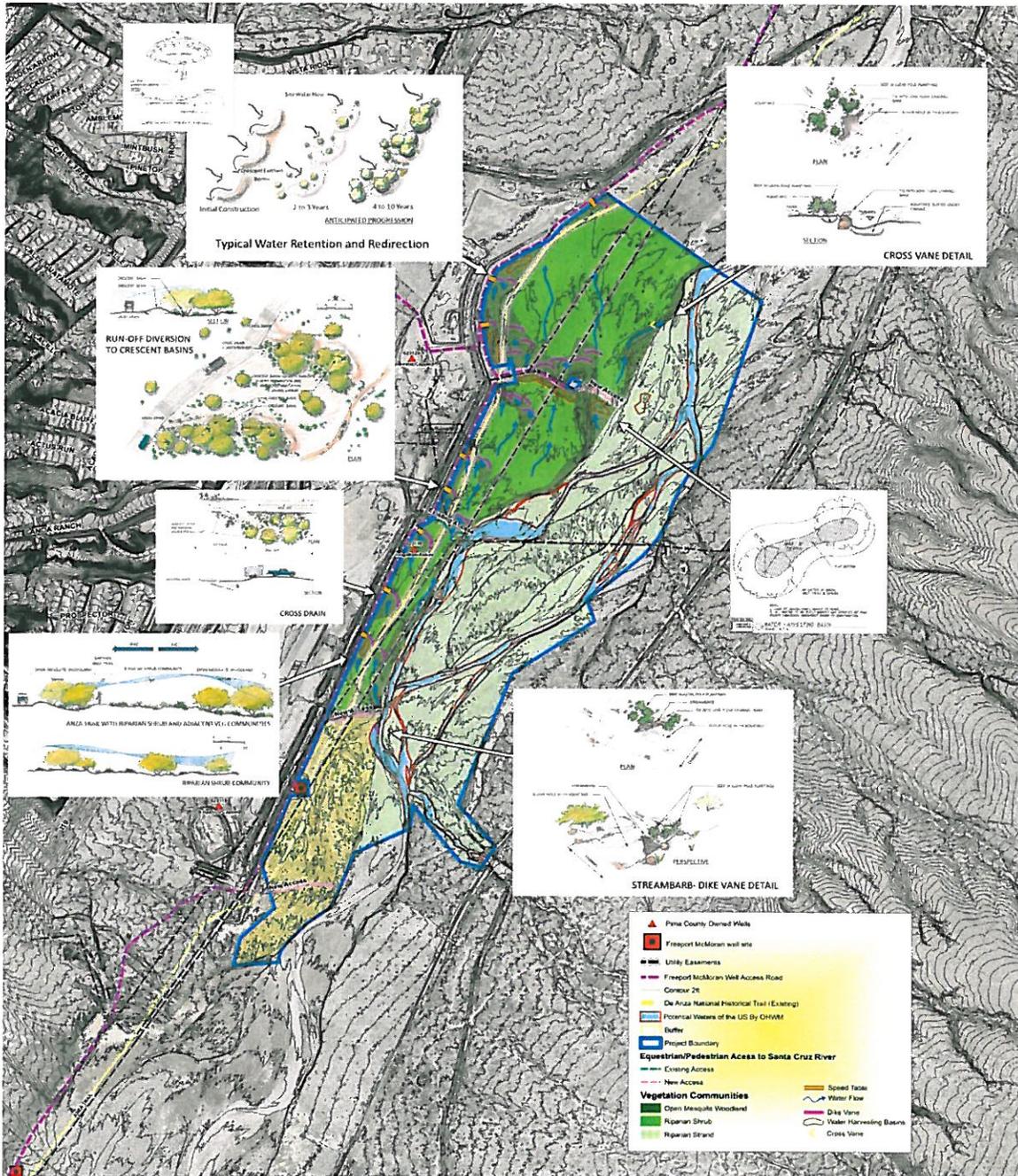


Figure 3. Canoa Ranch Conceptual Restoration Plan

Pima County Conservation Lands

Pima County purchased Canoa Ranch in 2001 for historical and cultural preservation, as well as for open-space protection and as future mitigation land for the Pima County Multi-Species Conservation Plan (MSCP) Section 10 Incidental Take Permit under the Endangered Species Act. Canoa Ranch totals about 4,800 acres and land is owned by Pima County and the Regional Flood Control District, with in-holdings owned by Phelps Dodge Sierrita Inc.-Sierrita Mine and the Union Pacific Railroad (Figure 4).

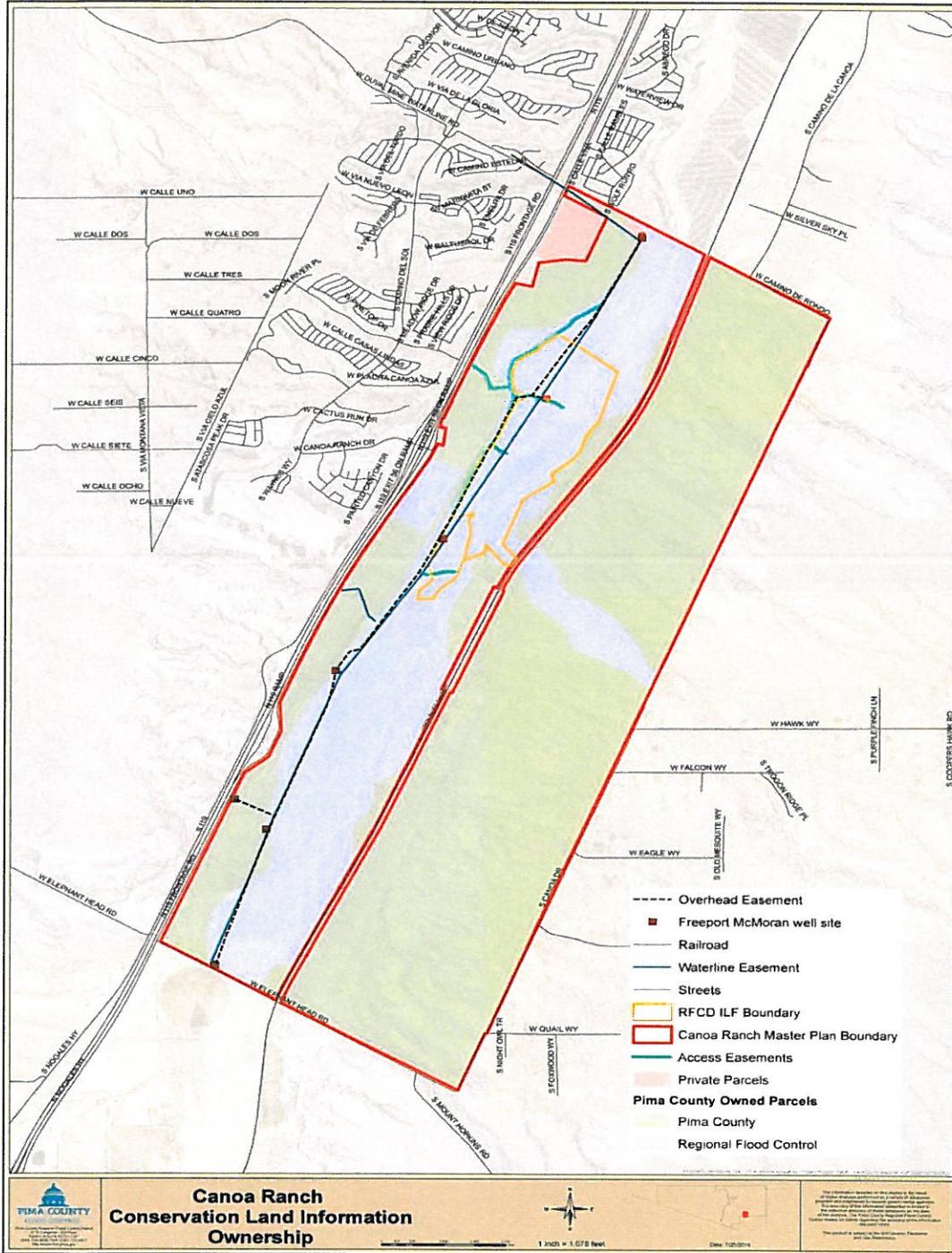
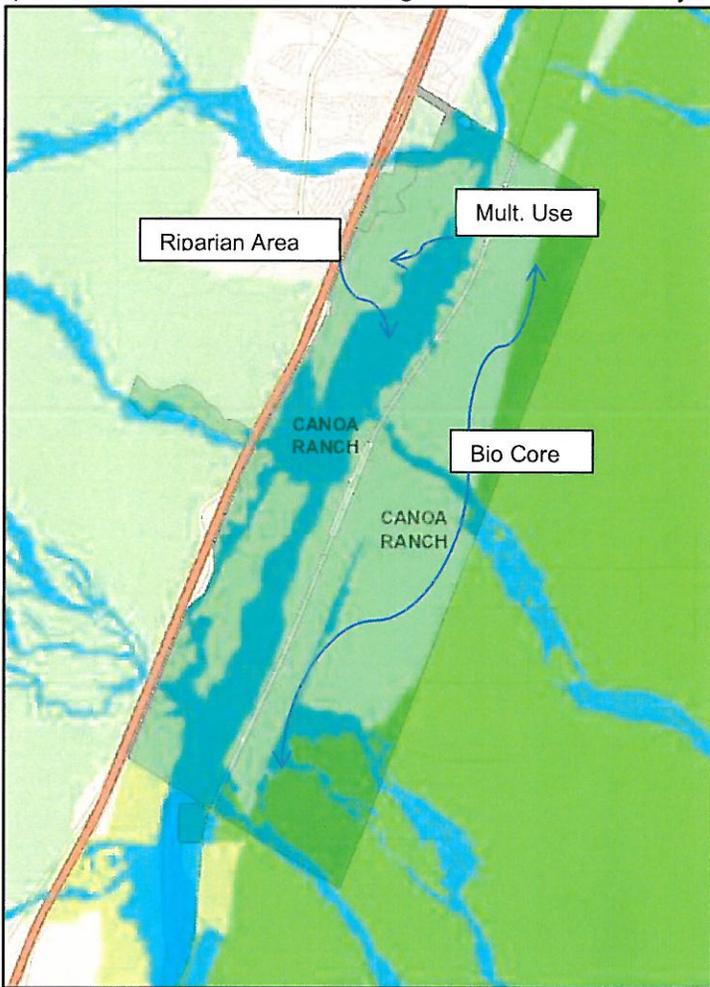


Figure 4. Land Ownership on Canoa Ranch

The Santa Cruz River at Canoa Ranch is primarily ephemeral, though in most years effluent flow from the Nogales Wastewater Facility reaches Canoa Ranch during the winter. Historic straightening, berming and removal of vegetation due to create agricultural fields and flood control activities have compromised floodplain functions along this reach. Groundwater pumping in the area has reduced the availability of surface water, though groundwater is generally less than 50 feet below the surface at the south edge of the ranch. In this area, riparian plant species such as Fremont cottonwood, Goodding willow, and seep willow are present along the Santa Cruz River.

Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan and Multi-Species Conservation Plan

In 1998, Pima County undertook the development of the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan to integrate land use planning and natural and cultural resource protections. The overarching purpose of the plan adopted in 2002 is to “ensure the long-term survival of the full spectrum of plants and animals that are indigenous to Pima County through maintaining or improving the



habitat conditions and ecosystem functions necessary for their survival.” With the exception of the acreage at the ranch headquarters and private in-holdings, the entire balance of Canoa Ranch is considered a key component of the SDCP and MSCP. Under the Maeveen Marie Behan Conservation Land System, these conservation lands at Canoa Ranch classified as biological core, important riparian area, and multiple-use will serve as future mitigation lands for Pima County’s Section 10 Incidental Take Permit under the Endangered Species Act (Figure 6). Maintaining the contiguity of the landscape will serve to protect endangered species and wildlife corridors from the Santa Cruz River to the Santa Rita Mountains. To preserve these values and maintain the mitigation function of these biologically sensitive lands, no development will be permitted in these important CLS areas to maintain the integrity of these natural systems. In addition to providing CLS mitigation credits, the Canoa Ranch also provides habitat for the Pima Pineapple Cactus (PPC), and there are known populations outside the geologic floodplains.

Figure 6. Canoa Ranch Conservation Land System

Because there are at present relatively few areas in the County conservation lands having habitat for this endangered cactus, and because future urban development is expected to have a disproportionate effect on the species, the mitigation value of the Canoa PPC land is not easily replaceable with other lands. Every effort should be made to avoid impacts to the areas outside the geologic floodplain, particularly the areas east of the Santa Cruz River.

