

Buffelgrass Eradication

- 1. Broad demonstrated support by the public:** There are thousands of volunteers that participate now in buffelgrass pulls. The University of Arizona is engaged from research to marketing to internships and in-kind student-led projects that advance the outreach of the Southern Arizona Buffelgrass Coordination Center (SABCC), Pima County's point organization leading buffelgrass control strategies and multi-jurisdictional coordination. K-12 students regularly create buffelgrass experiments for science fairs. Collaborative endeavors have been achieved among the various jurisdictions in Pima County, local and well as federal. We have close associations with the Arizona Sonora Desert Museum and the business community. The utility companies, particularly Tucson Electric Power, have been steadfast supporters.
- 2. Has general public benefit:** All citizens of Pima County directly benefit from a safer, more beautiful and more unique environmental backdrop. Jurisdictions benefit directly in the long run from lower public expenses. It is less expensive to treat now and reduce the spread of buffelgrass than to fight repetitive fires in perpetuity. Our situation with buffelgrass is like the dikes in New Orleans before Katrina – if there had been what now looks like a modest investment in fortification, the disaster could have been substantially avoided and tax payers would not have had a catastrophic bill. Tax payers will benefit by beating back buffelgrass now before it spreads to the point of being uncontrollable – at that point our only choice will be to accept the disastrous consequences of short-sighted stewardship.
- 3. Other funding sources or matches:** SABCC is aware of a private individual looking for a definable conservation project as their legacy. It may be possible to have Pima County Bond money matched in full.
- 4. Education and workforce training:** All members of the residential and business community need to be part of the ongoing solution. People in Pima County need to know what buffelgrass is and understand the importance of eliminating it from their homes and businesses. A comprehensive eradication project would certainly accomplish considerable public education. SABCC has developed a certification program for landscape contractors who can develop and market their expertise in buffelgrass mitigation. Organizations such as the Primavera Foundation are developing work crews for buffelgrass work on public and private properties.
- 5. Advances Board Adopted principles of sustainability and conservation:** 100%
- 6. Previously-authorized large-scale bond projects or programs that are now short of funding:** Buffelgrass mitigation and control have not been part of previous bond programs, however Pima County has made substantial investments in buffelgrass control to date.
- 7. Phasing of large projects:** Buffelgrass management must be viewed as a phased project. **Phase one** was to recognize the problem and form capacity to address the challenge. This was done with the formation of SABCC. **Phase two** is to collect data and develop

models for how to best approach control; with the initial risk assessment, decision support systems and data currently being optimized by SABCC, and collaborative input from fire and research professionals, we are well on our way to having enough information to develop scientific, economy-conscious attack strategies. **Phase three** is to mobilize the needed resources and act in a coordinated way. With a successful bond issuance and oversight and strategy development from SABCC, resources can be effectively deployed. **Phase four** will be ongoing monitoring and spot treatment. Individual jurisdictions, businesses and private land owners will all have to be held responsible for this on an ongoing basis. The prototype for large-scale buffelgrass mitigation is currently being developed using a FEMA pre-disaster mitigation grant on county property and the Tucson International Airport. At the end of the 3-yr project, buffelgrass management will no longer be an additional expense, but incorporated into regular vegetation management budgets requiring no additional funding.

- 8. Impact on operating and maintenance costs for governments and commitment to fund these ongoing costs:** The fact of buffelgrass will add expenses to the Pima County budget one way or another. The goal is to minimize these expenses over time. Early and aggressive reduction in the infested area followed by spot treatments on an ongoing basis as needed is the least expensive option. Alternatively, Pima County would have many more fires throughout the year which would necessitate not only larger fire fighting forces, but also involve regular loss of property and structures, and even lives. Property values would drop and the region would be less attractive to businesses, both of which would impact County tax revenues negatively.
- 9. Project or program is a capital improvement, not a repair or maintenance project:** Phase three of addressing the buffelgrass threat in Pima County has all the characteristics of a capital project. It requires a large capital outlay that provides ongoing benefits for many years thereafter. We normally think of a capital project as something like a building with a thirty year life; buffelgrass eradication is not a physical thing, *but the absence of a physical thing*, and the benefit is not something useful over a lifetime, *but rather the absence of a regular stream of bad (expensive) things over a lifetime*.

Requested amount: \$10 million