Learn More

- Find reports, project updates, and more information about the Living River Project at *http://tiny.cc/lscr*
- Be involved! Request a presentation to your group or contact us for more information:

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THE FLOWING SANTA CRUZ RIVER

Living River Project

Image credits: Cover left: Brian Forbes Powell; right: Robert Yanasak. Inside left: Brian Forbes Powell; center: Terry Moody; right: Dean Knuth (Pima County). Wildlife illustrations: Bill Singleton (Pima County).

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IN AN ARID **LANDSCAPE**, water is the essential resource for people and wildlife to survive. The Santa Cruz River has long been the lifeblood of the region, attracting the first humans over 12,000 years ago. In fact, the Santa Cruz River Valley has the longest continuous record of agriculture in the United States. Early inhabitants settled along the valley because the river supplied water year-round. Today, due to a variety of factors including groundwater pumping, many stretches flow only when it rains. Nevertheless, people are giving life back to the river. We are returning some sections to year-round flow by releasing effluent, or treated wastewater, back into the river.

View of Tucson and the Santa Cruz River from the south side of A Mountain, 1904 (Arizona Historical Society 24868)

The wastewater reclamation process includes removing solids, digesting organic wastes, reducing nutrients, and clarifying the water followed by disinfection, prior to releasing effluent into the river.

THE LOWER SANTA CRUZ RIVER

The lower Santa Cruz River in northwest Tucson and Marana flows year-round and provides the principal wetland habitat in Pima County. Water in this stretch of the river comes from two regional water reclamation facilities. Pima County recently completed its largest public works project by investing over $600 million to upgrade the quality of effluent released from these facilities into the river, which is expected to improve the aquatic environment. The Living River Project aims to track and communicate water quality and environmental improvements that result from these upgrades.

What changes do we anticipate?

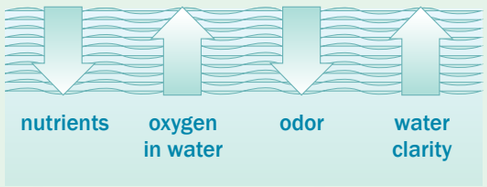
Rivers are dynamic, with conditions influenced by many factors including amount of rainfall, depth to groundwater, and adjacent land use. The Living River Project will track many natural changes as well as any changes that are directly related to the reclamation facility upgrades—such as improved water quality and reduced odors.

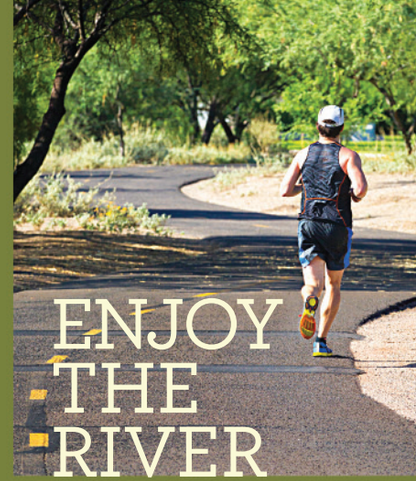
Santa Cruz River near Ina Road, 2014

Project Timeline

The Living River Project began in fall of 2012 and initial funding will run through summer 2016. Project updates and information will be shared at the annual Santa Cruz River Research Days, regional conferences, and community events. In addition, several reports and publications will be produced as part of the Living River Project and available on the website (*http://tiny.cc/lscr*). The primary publication sharing information about current conditions along the lower Santa Cruz River is the annual Living River report.

Pima County's upgrade of reclamation facilities will improve the quality of the water released into the river—ultimately benefiting aquatic animals.





ENJOY THE RIVER

You can see the lower Santa Cruz River for yourself by traveling sections of The Loop, the recreational path along the river (see detailed map at *www.pima.gov/TheLoop*). Effluent is released into the river near Columbus Park and Ina Road. See map for other parks and access points to see the river.

Species historically found along rivers and waterways in Pima County.