



MEMORANDUM

Date: April 30, 2013

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

From: C.H. Huckelberry
County Administrator 

Re: **El Corazón de los Tres Ríos del Norte**

Attached is a fact sheet related to our pursuit of federal funding for an environmental restoration and recreation project that could be authorized through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers from the Water Resources Development Act. We are at the very beginning stages of possible implementation of El Corazón de los Tres Ríos del Norte as a multi-benefit public recreation and environmental restoration project. The project overview is summarized in the attached fact sheet.

We are also beginning to enlist Congressional assistance for funding appropriations for the project which, when integrated into The Loop, will provide regional recreational benefits for Pima County residents and visitors.

CHH/dph

Attachment

Tres Ríos

El Corazón - The Heart of Tres Ríos del Norte at the Confluence of the Santa Cruz, Rillito and Cañada del Oro Rivers

Historical Background

Once a lush, fertile basin nestled in a riparian forest, El Corazón de los Tres Ríos del Norte (Tres Ríos) was home to native peoples, including the Hohokam, for 4,000 years. Through the years, Pima County's population has grown dramatically all around Tres Ríos and is now a thriving metropolitan region of nearly one million people, with more than 300,000 living less than one mile from the Tres Ríos river system. Today, this former desert jewel no longer resembles the treasure it once was. The Tres Ríos project will restore this site to its historic place of national significance as a unique place of respite and renewal in the Sonoran Desert.

Project Overview

The project includes ecosystem restoration along both banks of the Santa Cruz River, flood control protection for the surrounding community, and additional regional recreation elements. The project is undergoing a Feasibility Study, conducted by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, with an expected completion date by the end of 2013.

Since 1997, Pima County has already invested \$42.4 million on 12 projects in this area, from flood control to parks and recreation. An additional \$600 million in improvements are under way at regional wastewater facilities adjacent to the Tres Ríos project. Recently, Pima County acquired the Tres Ríos property at the confluence of the three rivers for \$4.2 million. Eight additional projects totaling over \$60 million are recommended for future bond funding. Similar bond packages have passed with over 60% voter approval on questions relating to ecosystem restoration, flood control and recreational improvements.



Extractive industry created unsightly pits that are erosion and flood hazards. Tres Ríos will restore natural habitat, control erosion, and create new recreation facilities on this site.



Tres Ríos will improve public health by providing opportunities for physical activity with walking and bicycling trails, ball fields, and a BMX/skate park.

The Tres Ríos project will:

- Complete the region's most important ecosystem restoration, flood control and water recharge project
- Expand tourism opportunities and revenues by enhancing one of the Southwest's premier bicycling, hiking and bird-watching destinations.
- Maintain and enhance the highly popular multi-use transportation systems under the Regional Transportation Authority and other plans.
- Provide bank stabilization and erosion control measures to address this potential hazard; the existing deep excavations will be re-contoured to create recreational features and for groundwater recharge.
- Mitigate degradation to habitat along the Santa Cruz River, preserving and enhancing open space in alignment with the goals of the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan.

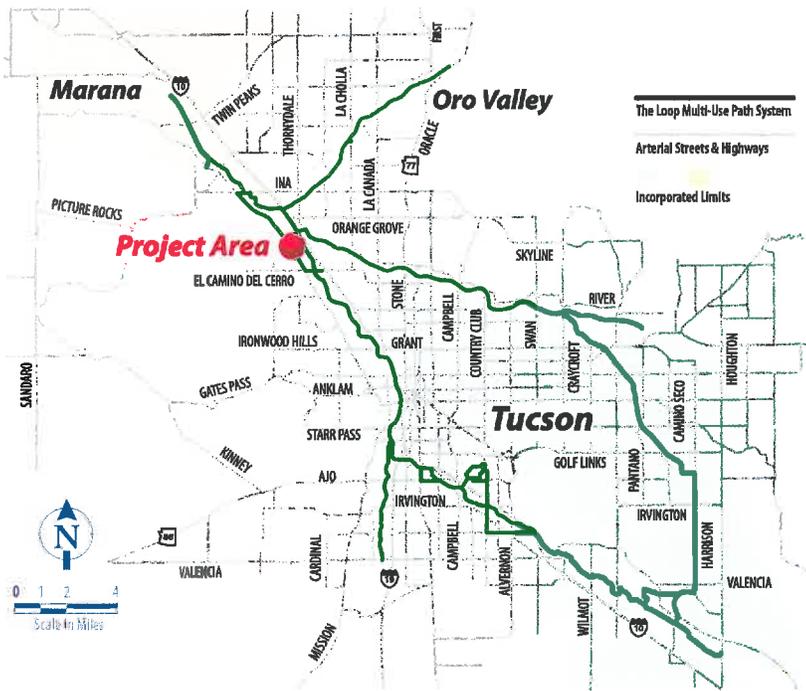
Request

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is completing its ecosystem restoration and flood control Feasibility Study in 2013 for the Santa Cruz River (WRDA 2000 – PL106-60, Pima County, Arizona -- Tres Ríos del Norte).

To ensure the timely continuation of this project in 2013 and 2014, the next steps require:

- 1) Funding of \$500,000 to begin formal design work (PED); and
- 2) Conditional authorization to fully fund the federal share of construction in the Water Resources Development Act currently being considered in the 113th Congress.

We would request that you strongly support the region's efforts to obtain PED funding and construction authorization for this vitally important project.



Tres Ríos's trails will connect to the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail, Tucson Mountain Park and The Loop, the 131-mile shared-use path along the county's rivers and washes. One-third of the region's population lives within a half mile of The Loop.



Multi-use projects create 50% more jobs than other infrastructure projects, 9.6 jobs per \$1 million of investment.



Tres Ríos' paths will allow kids to bike or walk to school, and provide alternative work commuting options for adults, thus reducing traffic congestion and pollution.



Restored natural habitat will attract migrating birds to Tres Ríos, creating another amenity for local residents and encourage tourists to spend additional time in Pima County.



Pima County home values near green space like The Loop and Tres Ríos are projected to increase by \$300 million, resulting in \$3 million in property tax revenue.