



MEMORANDUM

Date: March 26, 2019

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

From: C.H. Huckelberry
County Administrator 

Re: **Annual Report submitted to the US Fish and Wildlife Service Regarding the Section 10 Permit obtained through the Pima County Multi-species Conservation Plan**

The County is required to annually report on activities associated with our approved Multi-species Conservation Plan (MSCP). The attached memorandum dated March 21, 2019 reports the 2018 information. The notable findings are:

- The Section 10 Permit covered impacts of 44 private development projects at little or no cost to those projects.
- The Regional Flood Control District (RFCD) estimates that the Section 10 Permit saved \$200,000 in direct costs and \$1.5 million indirect costs due to avoided delays with one project.
- The US Army Corps of Engineers (CORPS) and US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) allowed a developer to rely on our Certificate of Coverage to meet Pima Pineapple Cactus mitigation obligations and saved the developer \$280,000.
- County staff, contractors and volunteers removed and treated approximately 1,300 acres of buffelgrass on County preserve lands.

The County is fulfilling our permit conditions and both County public projects and private development projects are benefiting from our Section 10 Permit as predicted. These benefits include direct or reduced costs and elimination of potential delays due to presence of federally endangered species.

CHH/lab

Attachment

c: Carmine DeBonis, Jr., Deputy County Administrator for Public Works
Linda Mayo, Director, Sustainability and Conservation



Sustainability ~ Conservation ~ Historic Preservation

Date: March 21, 2019

To: C.H. Huckelberry, County Administrator

From: Linda Mayne, Director
Julia Fonseca, Environmental Planning Manager

RE: Progress Report for the Pima County Multi-species Conservation Plan (MSCP)

This memo reviews the activity relating to Multi-species Conservation Plan activities, which address compliance with Section 10 of the Endangered Species Act for Pima County, Pima County Regional Flood Control District and participating private entities. A report of activities was submitted to the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on March 1. Additional information is provided in the annual report, which will be made available to the public on the MSCP webpage at www.pima.gov/mscp. Should you require printed copies of the annual report, please advise.

Background

The Section 10 permit requires the County to report annually to the USFWS, primarily to quantify impacts and mitigation, provide updates on implementation of any conservation measures, and identify any emerging issues with associated programs. The Section 10 permit authorizes activities that may incidentally harm 44 species (i.e., Covered Species), otherwise known as “take.” Under this permit, the currency used to estimate take is acres of land impacted. Up to 36,000 acres of take is authorized for a period of up to 30 years, in exchange for avoidance, minimization and mitigation measures detailed in the MSCP. The reporting period for the annual report submitted March 1, 2019 is January 1-December 31, 2018.

Findings

Notable achievements during the reporting period include:

- The Section 10 permit covered impacts of 44 private development projects.
- Forty-seven County Capital Improvement Projects were covered by the permit during calendar year 2018. Four CIP projects required mitigation.
- A total of 974 acres of mitigation land was required to offset public and private impacts to habitat. Over 4,000 acres is being allocated in the San Pedro and Cienega Creek valleys to compensate for current and future years of habitat loss.
- The Regional Flood Control District (RFCD) estimates that the Section 10 permit saved them \$200,000 in direct costs and \$1.5 million indirectly due to avoided delays with one project.
- The County developed a procedure allowing private developments to rely on Certificates of Coverage to streamline compliance with certain provisions of the County Native Plant Preservation Ordinance.

- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and USFWS allowed a developer to rely on Certificates of Coverage to meet mitigation obligations for Pima Pineapple Cactus under an existing Section 404 permit. This saved the developer an estimated \$280,000.
- The County RFCD reported a substantial increase in the number of riparian habitat reviews over last year. These reviews occur as part of the floodplain permitting process. Over 95% of applicants avoided impacting regulated riparian habitat, resulting in 2,196 instances of avoidance.
- Pima County staff, contractors, and volunteers removed or treated approximately 1,300 acres of buffelgrass on County preserve lands. Pima County also treated and/or removed buffelgrass from approximately 15 miles of road right-of-ways.

Monitoring and management activities included the following:

- A required management plan for mitigation lands at Bingham Cienega along the San Pedro River was completed and approved by U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- Office of Sustainability and Conservation staff made 1,193 separate observations on Covered Species; these were reported to the Arizona Game and Fish Department.
- County staff completed the first round of scheduled monitoring for Sonoran desert tortoise, four cave-dwelling bat species, and Chiricahua and lowland leopard frogs.
- County staff developed comprehensive monitoring protocols for the seven species listed above as well as western yellow-billed cuckoo and southwestern willow flycatcher.
- County staff in partnership with Tucson Audubon Society and the National Park Service established an additional 20 long-term vegetation and soils monitoring plots on County preserve lands.
- Pima County completed a required plan for potential translocations of MSCP-covered aquatic species to sites owned by Pima County or Pima County Regional Flood Control District ahead of schedule.
- County IT staff have designed an interdepartmental incidental observation database designed to readily share observations from field staff with managing departments.
- Pima County is contributing information about growth of a rare wetland plant known as the Arizona eryngo, and efforts to re-establish the plant at Agua Caliente Park have been renewed.

2020 Planned Activities

Continued extension of Section 10 (endangered species) streamlining for the private sector is one of staff's primary activities. Pima County Regional Flood Control District will initiate discussions with the Federal Emergency Management Agency about streamlining their species reviews for proposed alterations of floodplains that require approvals from that agency, and we are working to further streamline species review under the Clean Water Act program.

Other planned activities include:

- Developing protocols for monitoring landscape pattern change, seeps and springs, threats such as invasive species and off-road vehicle impacts, and climate.
- Implement the second round of monitoring for western yellow-billed cuckoo, cactus ferruginous pygmy owl, and southwestern willow flycatcher.

Summary

Pima County is fulfilling the terms of the Section 10 permit to the satisfaction of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. County and private construction projects are benefitting from the existence of the Section 10 permit in terms of reduced costs and elimination of potential delays due to the presence of federally listed species. New knowledge from monitoring of species and their habitats on County's conservation lands is helping land managers and wildlife agencies to better manage these lands for a broad range of stakeholder interests.