MEMORANDUM

Date: September 17, 2015

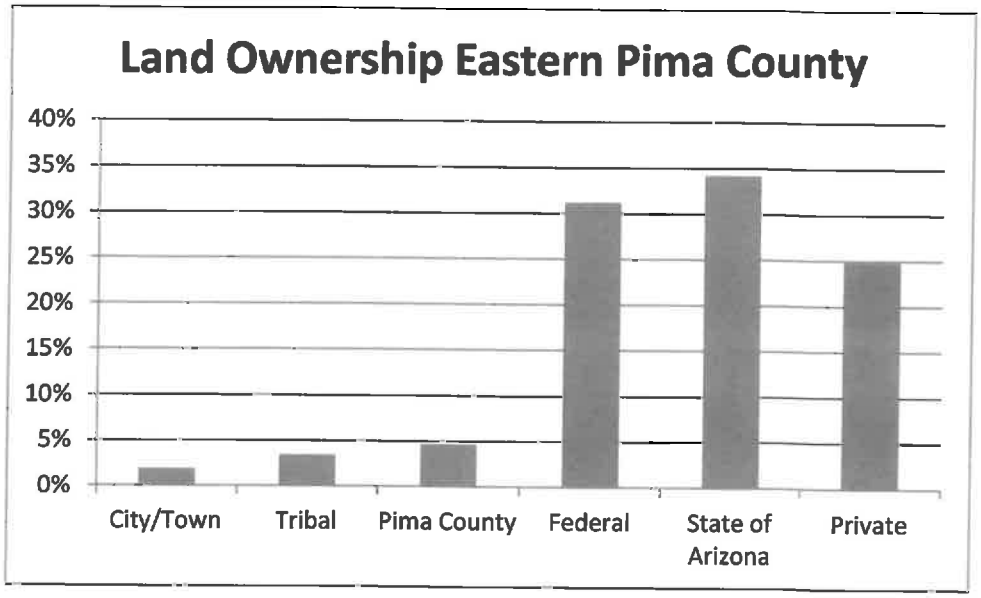
To: The Honorable Chair and Members
Pima County Board of Supervisors

From: C.H. Huckelberry
County Administrator

Re: **Land Ownership in Eastern Pima County**

Critics of the County's decades old open space acquisition program continue to site the 10 percent of private land in Pima County as a reason to end past practices of expanding our highly visited mountain parks and conserving other important natural areas. It makes more sense, however, to look at land ownership in eastern Pima County, as the bulk of western Pima County is made up of tribal and other federal lands, and eastern Pima County is the economic hub of the County.

In eastern Pima County, 25 percent of the land is private, 34 percent is primarily State Trust land, 31 percent is federal land, and the remaining 10 percent is owned by cities, towns, Pima County and Native American tribes.



The Arizona State Land Department's website states that State Trust lands are not public lands and are held in trust for the purpose of maximizing revenues from land leases and sales to fund Arizona K-12 schools. State Trust land is regularly sold to the highest bidder,

often for private development, which means it is then converted to private land and subject to property taxes.

Almost 60 percent of land in eastern Pima County is either privately owned and already paying property taxes or is State Trust land that continues to be sold annually for mostly private development that then becomes private land and generates property tax revenues.

Furthermore, repeated studies have shown that the County's purchases of private land have had a miniscule diminution to the property tax base, as many of the properties are currently assessed at very low agricultural rates. In addition, it is well known that permanently protected natural areas actually increase adjacent property values and are sought after places to live and stay. Many high-priced homes and resorts are located adjacent to the County's Tucson Mountain Park and Tortolita Mountain Park.

CHH/mjk

c: Nicole Fyffe, Executive Assistant to the County Administrator
Diana Durazo, Special Staff Assistant to the County Administrator