

427.6 Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum - Exhibits & Facility Expansion

Location: Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum 2021 N. Kinney Rd., Tucson, AZ 85743.

Scope: New exhibits and infrastructure improvements, including:

Coast to Canyons: Journey of the Jaguar (working title) – The project is comprised of multiple distinct pieces, each one of which is an attraction in and of itself. Covering an area of approximately 1.5 acres, the experience will include dozens of species of plant and animal life, each playing a significant role in telling the story of the southern portion of mainland Sonoran Desert. The story weaves its way from the coast of the Sea of Cortez to the Sierra Madre Occidental through multiple life zones. Each zone has a flagship species (including jaguar, American crocodile, and Mexican wolf) and a unique landscape that will be interpreted. Water and its importance to the desert will be incorporated into the story as we follow it from the top of the mountains to the Sea of Cortez. In addition to amazing plant and animal life, interpretive experiences, children’s play spaces, and new climate-controlled zones, we will incorporate a variety of revenue generating experiences and facilities, which will help sustain the operations of this habitat-immersion complex.

Water delivery infrastructure – Rehabilitation of potable and fire-suppression water delivery systems to include but not limited to well upgrades, new storage and waterline replacement. The intent is to increase on-site water storage and delivery for public consumption and fire suppression systems, hereby reducing the risk of third party water delivery to meet demand or emergencies. Wells and water infrastructure systems will be owned and maintained by Pima County since all operations and maintenance must be performed by an Arizona certified well operator. The Desert Museum will be responsible for any additional electrical costs to operate.

Benefits: With an international reputation as a pioneer in regional natural history interpretation, the Desert Museum draws visitors from around the world (reviews by TripAdvisor continually rank it as a “*Top Ten*” museum). The aforementioned projects will allow the Museum to develop new cutting edge exhibits and experiences that will help maintain the Museum’s stellar reputation and increase its power to draw new audiences and attract more visitors to Tucson and Pima County. In addition, they will lead to:

- A broader range of immersive experiences for Museum visitors.
- Improved and more interactive exhibits.
- Extended visitor stays & motivate visitors to become members (especially those who live in Pima County).
- Deeper visitor understanding of the Sonoran Desert Region.
- Opportunities for increased revenue.
- Increased indoor space, which is advantageous during inclement weather.
- Ensuring potable water is available for Museum guests, live animals and plant collections, and that fire suppression is available on-site to mitigate fire emergencies.

Total Cost Estimate: \$11,350,000

Coast to Canyons: Journey of the Jaguar - \$8,750,000

Water Delivery Infrastructure - \$600,000

Bond Funding Estimate: \$9,350,000

Other Funding Estimate: \$2,000,000 - The Desert Museum already has a pledge of \$2,000,000, toward exhibit construction and sustaining support, for the jaguar portion of the exhibit. The Museum will seek other contributions to help sustain the entire exhibit project complex, and will be responsible for all operations and maintenance costs, which are estimated to be over \$7,000,000 during the life of this exhibit complex.

Total Cost Estimate by Major Task: Coast to Canyons – planning and design at \$1,100,000, construction at \$9,650,000, Water infrastructure – planning and design at \$100,000, construction at \$500,000

Implementation Periods: 1, 2

Project Schedule by Major Task: Coast to Canyons - planning and design at 9 months, construction at 14-20 months; water infrastructure – planning and design at 3 months, construction at 7 months.

Project Manager: Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum (Project requested by Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum)

Operator: Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum

Future Operating and Maintenance Costs: The Desert Museum will be responsible for operating and maintenance costs for the Coast to Canyons exhibit project. The County will continue to provide operating and maintenance support for water delivery. Upgrades may increase electrical costs in order to provide adequate on demand water delivery through increased water storage. Estimated costs to the County should not exceed \$10,000 annually.

Regional Benefits: These projects are examples of the Museum's continuing effort to display and interpret the unique aspects of the region and engage the visiting public about the biodiversity and iconic plants and animals of this area. The comprehensiveness and hands-on aspects of these proposed projects should encourage visitors to Tucson and Pima County to not only spend more time at the Desert Museum, but also lengthen their stay while in Tucson. It is believed that by offering these greatly enriched experiences to those who choose to travel to southern Arizona, we will positively impact economic development through tourism, as well as create a better educated citizenry and stewards of this great region.