

428.38 Aqua Caliente Park Pond Restoration

Location: 12325 East Roger Road.

Scope: This project will address the failure of the natural spring at Agua Caliente Park and inability of supplemental well water to maintain the water level in the historic Pond one. The project will include the draining, dredging and contouring of Pond One to reduce its overall footprint to approximately 2 acres from the current 3.5 acres. Most of the pond will be deepened to remove built up sediments and invasive cattail infestations will be reduced to a more manageable size. Wildlife loafing islands will be added inside the pond. The pond will have a liner installed to eliminate water loss through the sides and bottom. The existing well system will be upgraded and water piped to additional locations in the park including the spring area and Pond Two for smaller dependable wildlife waters. Access to the historic Island will be restored with an ADA accessible pathway. The landscaping will be renovated to reduce over-population of some trees and the addition of new native species of trees, shrubs and aquatic plants. Pond Two will get additional plantings of wildlife-friendly native plants.

Benefits: Agua Caliente Park is a unique Pima County park. Well over 150,000 visitors enjoy the park on an annual basis. It has been a favorite community park for decades because of its water features, lush vegetation, historical buildings and abundant wildlife. Its historic importance in the Tucson region is also well documented and the site is on the National Register of Historic Places. For more than a decade of continuing drought, the natural water source for the ponds has been declining. Natural flows dropped from 120+ gallons a minute in 2000 to the point now where the spring has dried up and does not flow for a good part of the year. Significant supplemental well water additions cannot keep even Pond One filled within the capabilities of the water system and water rights available at the park. Well over 40 percent of the surface of Pond One is now unsightly exposed mud flats. The aged pond system will be renovated and a new water budget consistent with existing water resources will be established for the site that will maintain the character of the ponds, provide diverse wildlife habitat and the lush environment visitors have come to expect when visiting the park. Water quality or quantity issues could severely impact the fish and amphibians in the pond and plants around the pond if these improvements are not made. The project will give new life to the pond system at Agua Caliente Park for decades to come and restore the site to a favorite place for local residents to visit, walk and enjoy a slower paced and natural environment experience.

Total Cost Estimate: \$1,000,000

Bond Funding Estimate: \$1,000,000

Other Funding Estimate: None identified at this time.

Total Cost Estimate by Major Task: \$75,000 for planning and design, \$925,000 for construction.

Implementation Periods: 1, 2

Project Schedule by Major Task: Planning and design at 6 months, construction at 24 months

Project Manager: Pima County

Operator: Pima County

Future Operating and Maintenance Costs: Estimated at \$30,000 per year from the General Fund.

Regional Benefits: This project will positively impact users from across the Tucson metro area and visitors from around the country. Park visitors routinely come from all parts of town. This iconic park is considered by many as a community treasure and is recognized nationally for its historic roots.