

**PIMA COUNTY, ARIZONA  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS POLICY**

**Subject: Protection and Management of County  
Conservation Lands**

**Policy  
Number**

**C. 3.20**

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**PURPOSE:**

This policy requires the County to maintain an accurate inventory of *County Conservation Lands* and to protect the public's investment in the acquisition of these lands by maintaining and protecting the non-monetary, intrinsic values of properties acquired as open space for purposes of preserving the natural, biological, and cultural resources of these lands.

**DEFINITIONS:**

*County Conservation Lands* are lands that:

- 1) Pima County owns in fee or holds a less-than-fee interest, and the property interest is held and managed specifically for the purpose of preserving the open space, natural area character, and the natural, biological, and cultural resources found on those properties; and
- 2) the Pima County Regional Flood Control District owns in fee or holds a less-than-fee interest in certain lands held and managed specifically for the purpose of preserving the open space, natural area character, and the natural, biological, and cultural resources found on those properties, and the property interest is held and managed specifically in accordance with Pima County Code Title 16 Floodplain Management, which states: " The highest and best use of regulatory floodplains within the County is for maintenance of natural hydrologic and hydraulic stream flow processes, with consideration for groundwater recharge, aesthetics, natural open space, recreation areas, and flora, fauna, and other wildlife habitat resources."

*Less-than-fee-interest* refers to a property interest that is less than full ownership of all the legal rights associated with a property, such as a conservation easement, restrictive covenant, or lease.

**BACKGROUND:**

Pima County voters have repeatedly approved open space bond funding to acquire land for the protection of natural areas, biological and cultural resources, and ranchlands. These bonds have enabled fee title acquisitions from willing sellers, supplemented by donations from willing owners and acquisition of less-than-fee interests. Bond funds have protected large rural properties such as A-7 Ranch, as well as urban areas such as portions of Tumamoc Hill. Funds for the acquisition of certain flood-prone lands have resulted in conservation of riparian areas such as Cienega Creek Preserve. Collectively, the intrinsic, non-monetary natural and cultural values of these *County Conservation Lands* significantly contribute to implementation of the County's ground-breaking Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan (SDCP). These values include:

- Maintaining regional, national, and international continuity of ecosystems, biological diversity and cultural heritage;
- Mitigating for impacts permitted under the County's Endangered Species Act Section 10 permit;
- Protecting floodplains and riparian habitat areas;

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- Maintaining natural hydrologic and hydraulic stream flow processes;
- Facilitating groundwater recharge;
- Preserving archaeological, cultural, and historic resources;
- Protecting farm and ranch lands;
- Providing outdoor recreation opportunities for residents and visitors;
- Conserving scenic views; and
- Supporting ecotourism and economic opportunities dependent on natural and cultural areas.

**POLICY:**

It is Pima County’s policy that the responsible departments will work collaboratively to protect and otherwise maintain and manage the intrinsic and non-monetary values of *County Conservation Lands*. *County Conservation Lands* shall be managed in accordance with rules, policies, regulations, procedures, and guidance established by applicable federal, state and county laws, including applicable conservation easements and other property-specific agreements adopted by the Board of Supervisors and/or Flood Control District Board of Directors that govern the protection of natural and cultural resources.

Individual *County Conservation Land* properties will be periodically evaluated to determine whether, or if, specific protections are necessary to protect the property’s intrinsic values.

An inventory of *County Conservation Lands* will be maintained in a GIS database and updated as necessary. The inventory will be available on a County website.

**ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE:**

The County Administrator is directed to develop an Administrative Procedure that addresses the development and maintenance of an inventory of *County Conservation Lands* and interdepartmental coordination procedures as necessary.

**RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENTS:**

Regional Flood Control District, the Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation Department, and the Office of Sustainability and Conservation will be responsible for the implementation of this policy, in coordination with all other County departments.

Adopted Date: December 1, 2020  
Effective Date: December 1, 2020