Pima County Regional Flood Control District
Monthly Brown Bag Series

A LIVING RIVER – CHARTING SANTA CRUZ RIVER CONDITIONS

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The Santa Cruz River has long been the backbone of the region's natural and cultural heritage. Although the river has changed since humans have first arrived to the region 12,000 years ago, the river still exists and is a "living" entity that continues to support wildlife and communities along its course. Throughout Arizona the release of effluent is maintaining flows of many river reaches. The Santa Cruz River is fortunate to have two stretches with effluent flows – one near Nogales in Santa Cruz County and one near Tucson in Pima County. The major facilities releasing effluent into the river have undergone significant upgrades. The release of higher-quality water is a key ingredient in supporting wetland health along the river, but how can we gauge conditions of this valuable ecosystem and community amenity?

The Living River annual reports chart the status of these two stretches of the Santa Cruz River by presenting data on indicators of wetland health with easy to follow text and engaging graphics. These reports have been a critical tool in demonstrating that although effluent flows are not "natural", they provide numerous benefits including habitat for wildlife, aquifer recharge, and important recreation opportunities. Notable findings include the following: improved water clarity and quality, reductions in nutrient pollution, contraction of flow extent with higher infiltration rates, and improvements in aquatic wildlife. This long-term monitoring program has made use of diverse data sets collected by multiple agencies and serves as an important baseline of scientific information for river management decisions.

Wednesday, July 8, 2020: 12:00 - 1:00 PM
Online via Teams