

# Timeline of the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan



*The Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan (SDCP) is guiding regional efforts to conserve the best lands and most precious resources for future generations of Pima County residents to enjoy. The Plan combines short-term actions with long-range land-use decisions in Pima County, one of the most biologically diverse counties in the U.S. From cactus-studded deserts to conifer forests, the diverse landscape of Pima County is the home to a million residents from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and contains a rich diversity of plant and animal life.*

**1998**

### Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan Concept Approval

The Pima County Board of Supervisors (BOS) approved the concept for the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan (SDCP) in October of 1998. Later in the year, the Board signed a resolution with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to uphold the Endangered Species Act through a Multi-Species Conservation Plan process.

**1999**

### Development of Regional Conservation Plan

In March of 1999, the Board directed that the planning process be accelerated to develop a regional conservation plan.

**2000**

### Ironwood Forest Presidential Proclamation

The SDCP generated key information that contributed to the creation of two new Bureau of Land Management areas: Ironwood National Monument and Las Cienegas National Conservation Area.



### Multi-Species Conservation Plan Process Begins

In September of 2000, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service released a notice of intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement and notice of the public scoping meetings related to the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan.



### Cooperative Agreements

In December of 2000, the Pima County Board of Supervisors, the Tohono O'odham Nation and various federal agencies agreed to cooperative planning for the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan.

### Allocation of the Conservation Effluent Pool

In 2000, and City/County Intergovernmental Agreement stipulated that up to 10,000 acre-feet of effluent known as the Conservation Effluent Pool (CEP) shall be made available for riparian projects that are part of a habitat conservation plan or that are mutually agreed upon by the City and County.

### Pima Invasive Species Council

The Pima Invasive Species Council was formed in 2000, in response growing concerns with invasive species issues. The forerunner of the Southern Arizona Buffelgrass Coordination Council, the group was formed of non-profit, federal and local agencies concerned about invasive species, and cooperated with groups doing volunteer eradication projects.

**2001**

### Environmentally Sensitive Roadway Design Provisions

The environmentally sensitive roadway design provisions were developed in 2001 due to growing concerns from the community about potential conflict between preserving environmentally sensitive areas, transportation design and construction practices, and the ongoing need for infrastructure improvement.



### Native Plant Nursery Established

In September, the Board of Supervisors accepted a recommendation as part of the preliminary Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan to develop a Sonoran Desert plant nursery.

### Adoption of Comprehensive Plan with CLS

In 2001, the Pima County Board of Supervisors adopted the Pima County Comprehensive Land Use Plan Update. Integrated into this plan update was the Conservation Lands System (CLS), which represents the biological reserve, developed with more than 150 members of the science community after three years of study.

**2003**



### Steering Committee Report to the Board

The Steering Committee was appointed by the Board in 1999, representing diverse viewpoints to advise the Board about reserve design and to continue to formulate alternatives for the Section 10 permit. Their recommendation came out in June 2003.

**2004**

### Ranch Management

Pima County acquired the 41,000-acre A-7 Ranch from the City of Tucson. Since then, the County has purchased more than 50,000 acres associated with large working ranches. Ranches function as an unfragmented natural buffer to our urban area, preserve scenic views, and conserve our western heritage and culture.

### Bond Election

In 2004, voters approved a \$164.3 million bond program for acquisition of open space in support of the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan. Through past actions and acquisitions, Pima County has built a reserve totaling approximately 200,000 acres, of which 46,716 acres have been acquired with the 2004 Bond monies.

**2005**

### Adoption of CLS Map

The Conservation Lands System Regional Plan Policy was updated June 21, 2005. The 2005 update included the CLS conservation land categories, an associated conservation guideline policy, and map.



### New Riparian Habitat Maps

In September 2005, the Board of Directors of the Flood Control District adopted the Floodplain Management Ordinance No. 2005-FC2. The original Riparian Classification Maps were developed in 1994 to protect riparian habitat associated with floodplains and updated in 2005 as part of the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan.

**2006**

### Regional Transportation Authority

In May 2006, voters approved a \$2.1 billion transportation plan, which included \$45 million for transportation related Critical Landscape Linkages.

**2007**

### Ecological Monitoring Plan Grant

In August of 2007, Pima County was awarded a \$274,505 grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to support the development of an ecological monitoring plan. The Pima County Ecological Monitoring Plan is being developed as part of the County's Section 10 permit.



### Water Resources Policy

In December of 2007, the Pima County Board of Supervisors approved an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan Water Resources Policy. The amendment strengthened the water resource element regional plan policies, requiring staff to conduct water supply impact reviews on Comprehensive Plan amendments larger than 4 acres.

**2009**



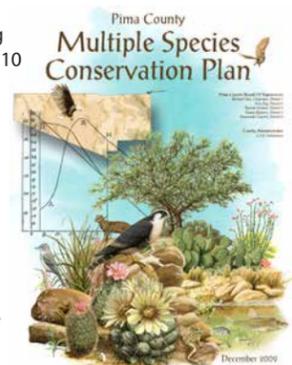
### Acquisition of Tumamoc Hill

On February 23, 2009, Pima County acquired the parcels encompassing the western slopes of Tumamoc Hill. The 277-acre acquisition continues the University of Arizona's existing research mission, and the preservation of the property's natural open space and significant archaeological and historic resources.

**2010**

### MSCP Application

In December of 2010, after over a decade of planning and development, Pima County submitted a Section 10 Multi-Species Conservation Plan application to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Pima County's MSCP is the part of the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan that deals with endangered species compliance.



**2012**

### Environmental Impact Statement

On December 7, 2012, the Pima County Multi-Species Conservation Plan (MSCP) and its associated Environmental Impact Statement were posted to the Federal Register by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

**2013**

### Completion of Open Space Bond Acquisitions

Since 1997, Pima County has been working on fulfilling the task assigned by this community to conserve this region's most prized natural and cultural resources. On May 16, 1997 and May 18, 2004, voters showed overwhelming support at the ballot box for the protection of these places by approving bond measures that authorized the acquisition of properties for conservation purposes. Today, the open space bond acquisitions are substantially complete.

The County now manages approximately 230,000 acres for conservation, with over 100,000 acres of it owned in fee by the County. The properties range in size from less than an acre to over 30,000 acres and represent the diversity of landscapes that make Pima County unique.