



MEMORANDUM

Date: November 8, 2018

To: Chuck Huckelberry
County Administrator

Carmine DeBonis, Jr.
Deputy County Administrator
for Public Works

From: 
Nicole Fyffe
Executive Assistant
to the County Administrator

Re: **Donation of Conservation Easements over 545 acres in Alley Valley West of Ajo**

Background

The purpose of this memorandum is to brief you on several property transactions that will likely be scheduled for the Board of Supervisor's December 4, 2018 Agenda. There will be eight separate agenda items listed as Donation of Conservation Easement, under Real Property.

In 2017, Supervisor Sharon Bronson's office was contacted by a group of private property owners who had been working together for a number of years to conserve their properties totaling 545 acres west of the Town of Ajo, in an area referred to as Alley Valley (map attached). The properties are separated by a mountain ridge from the town and a large copper mining pit, and surrounded on the other three sides by mountains and federal land managed by the Bureau of Land Management. Alley Road, a dirt road maintained by Pima County, traverses the valley and is promoted by the Ajo Chamber as part of a 10-mile scenic loop (brochure attached), as well as the gateway to the Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument. The properties are also in close proximity to the Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge. The properties are within the Multiple Use and Special Species Management Areas of County's Conservation Lands System. The properties are largely undeveloped and contain an interesting mix of large saguaros and organ-pipe cactus. Desert big horn sheep have been seen on the properties, and Endangered Sonoran pronghorn are known to occur nearby.

Donation of Conservation Easements

After meeting with the owners and visiting the properties, and in consultation with Natural Resources Parks and Recreation (NRPR), Office of Sustainability and Conservation (OSC), and Development Services Department (DSD), it was determined that conservation of these

Messrs. Huckelberry and DeBonis

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properties could be accomplished by the owners' donating conservation easements to Pima County, which is the least costly option for Pima County. By donating conservation easements, the owners will retain ownership of the properties, but will legally be restricted from developing the majority of the property. The public is not permitted to access the properties, as they would remain privately owned. However, the public benefits from the conservation of these properties because of the native wildlife and scenic views that will be protected in perpetuity. The owners are discussing the possibility of developing a scenic pull-off for public use along Alley Road with interpretive signage describing the area and its contributions to the region's conservation.

Minor Development Permitted

All but one of the properties is zoned residential. One property is zoned industrial. Five of the conservation easements do permit the future development of between 1 and 3 single-family residences, including two conservation easements that permit development of what is described as a conservation research center. The owners do not intend on developing two conservation research centers, but have not yet decided which of the properties is most suitable for this purpose. In total, of the 545 acres, a maximum of 12 acres could be developed. Any development would still be required to comply with Pima County zoning regulations and ordinances.

NRPR staff intend to visit the property once a year to monitor compliance with the conservation easements. A detailed baseline documentation report was developed by NRPR, which describes the current condition of the properties, lists native plants and wildlife, and documents improvements that exist on the property (a few small residences, water tanks, and other improvements). A copy of the report will be recorded as an exhibit to the conservation easements, and is available for your review upon request.

Please let me know if you have any questions about these. I will update Supervisor Bronson's staff.

NF/anc

Attachments

c: Chris Cawein, Director, Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation
Linda Mayro, Director, Office of Sustainability and Conservation
Neil Konigsberg, Manager, Real Property Services
Chris Poirier, Deputy Director and Planning Director, Development Services
Karen Simms, Division Manager, Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation
Iris Rodden, Conservation Biologist, Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation
Mike Stofko, Program Manager, Real Property Services
Sherry Ruther, Planning Manager, Office of Sustainability and Conservation

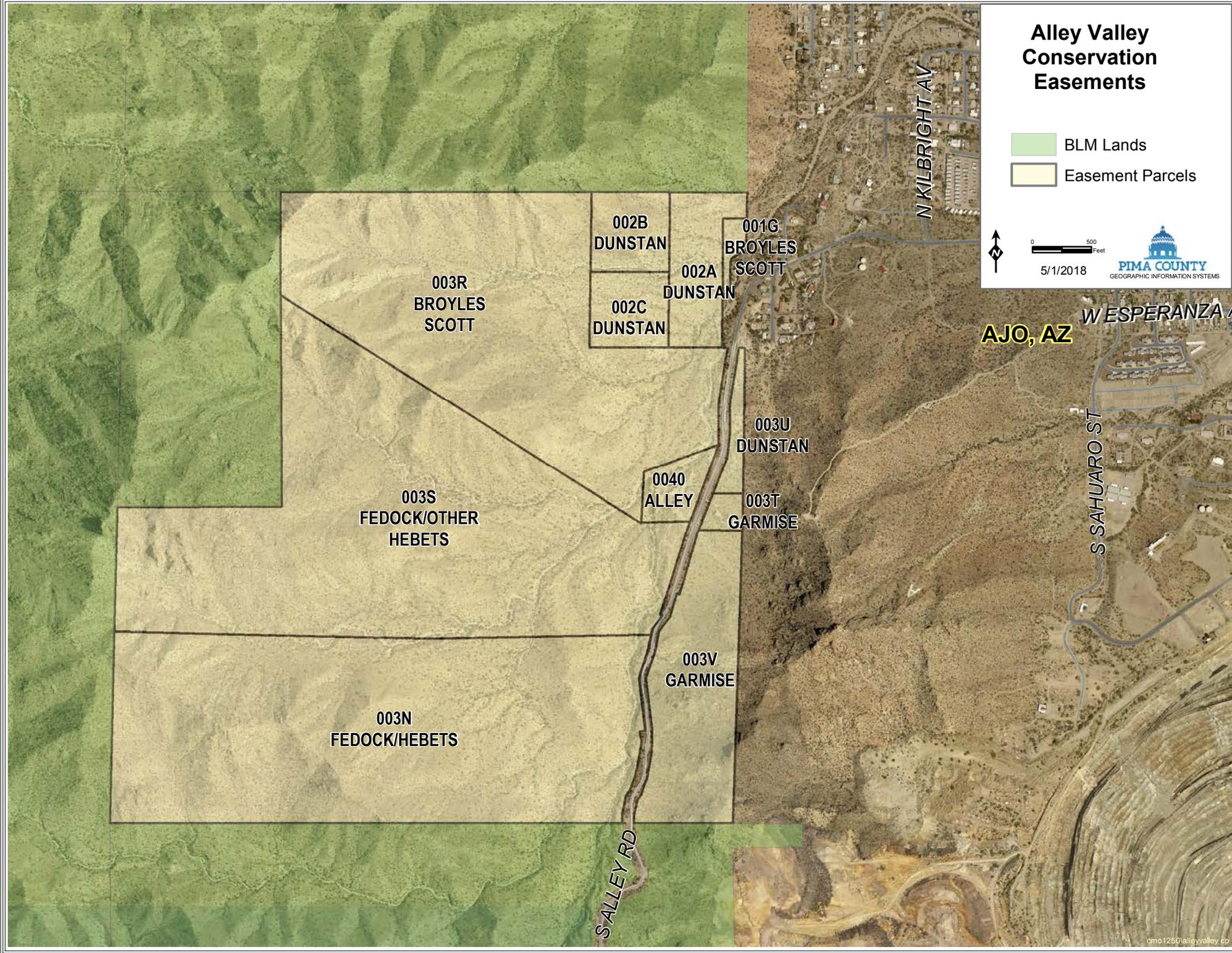
Alley Valley Conservation Easements

-  BLM Lands
-  Easement Parcels



0 500 Feet

5/1/2018





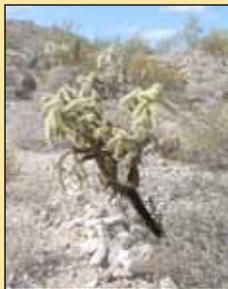
Saguaro Cactus



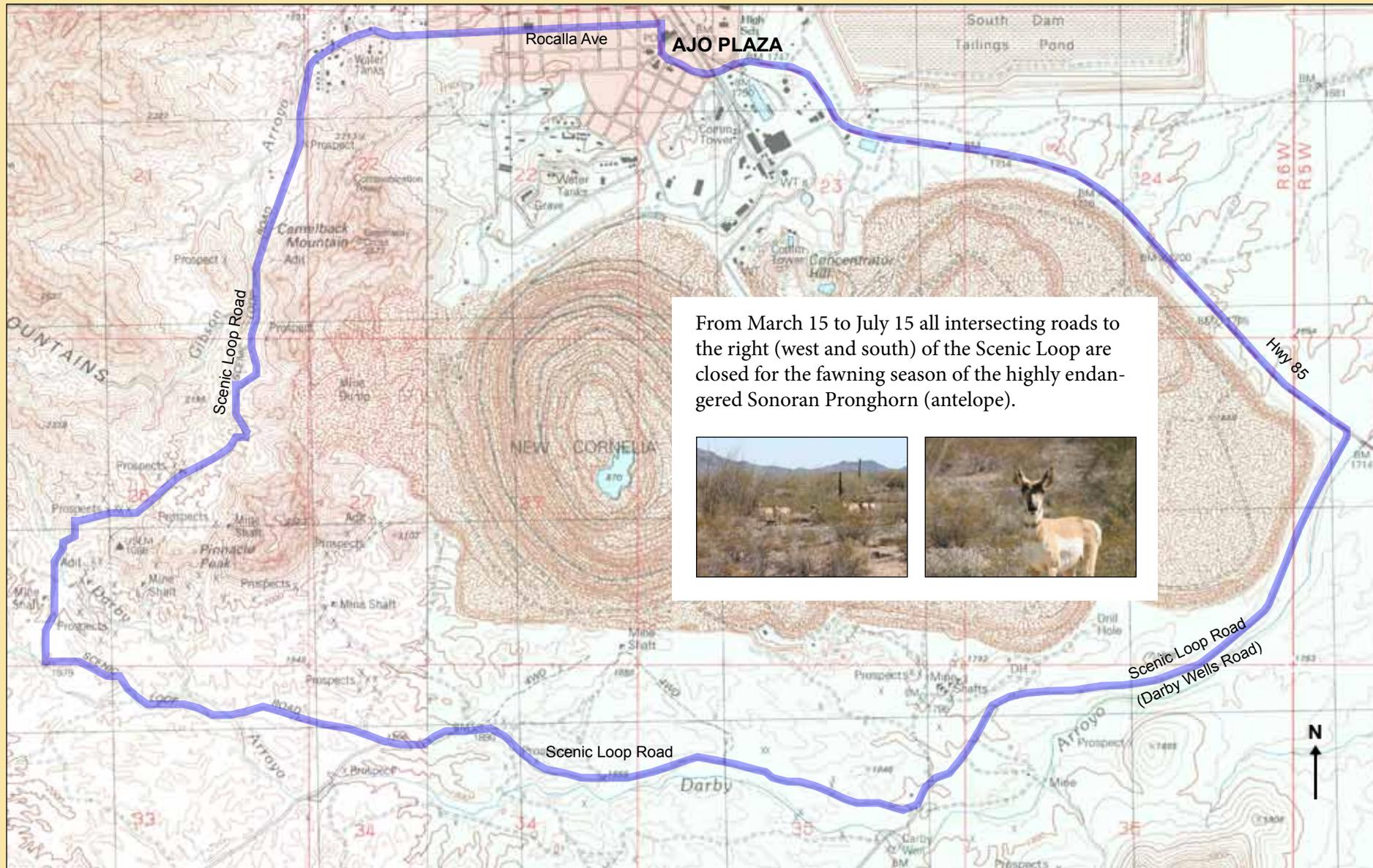
Ocotillo Shrub



Organ Pipe Cactus



Cholla Cactus



From March 15 to July 15 all intersecting roads to the right (west and south) of the Scenic Loop are closed for the fawning season of the highly endangered Sonoran Pronghorn (antelope).



Coyote



Cactus Wren

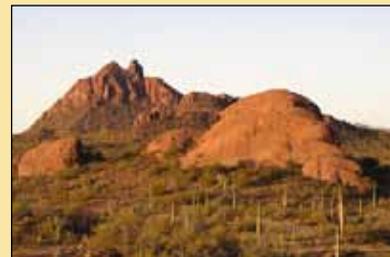


Javelinas



Bobcat

You are welcome to stop for photos, etc., but please pull to the side of the road. Do not drive OFF the road into the desert. Many BLM roads intersect the Scenic Loop. Street-legal vehicles are permitted on these roads.



This is mining country and you will frequently see evidence of old diggings. Many are on private property, as are homesteads and ranches. Please respect their privacy. No trespassing!

START HERE

Please keep this side folded in as you begin your journey.

As you leave the Plaza, set your odometer to 0.0 and turn right onto the highway. Go three blocks then turn left on Rocalla Ave.

MILE 1.1 Keep left for the Scenic Loop (Alley Rd). The pavement soon ends and you begin 7.5 miles of graded but bumpy dirt road.

MILE 1.5 The large cross atop the mountain to your left honors John Campbell Greenway, first mine superintendent and founder of Ajo. The townspeople erected this cross shortly after the beloved founder's untimely death in 1926.

MILE 1.7 To your right is Gibson Arroyo, one of the major drainage channels through town.

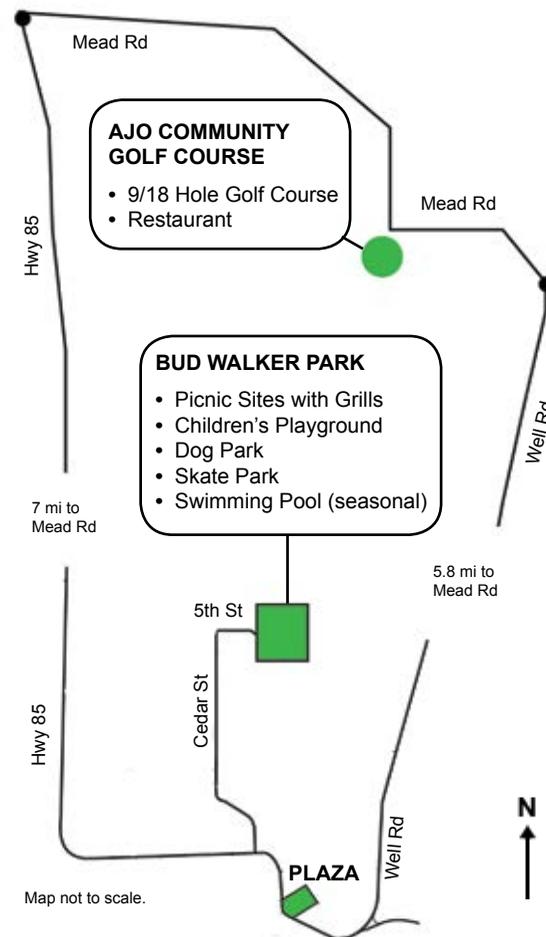
MILE 2.2 Excellent examples of organ pipe cacti may be found on either side of the road.

MILE 3.0 Ahead of you are many expansive views and unusual volcanic rock formations. Ajo Mountains are to the far, far distant left, across the Valley of the Ajo.

MILE 4.2 Note the lush vegetation as you cross this sandy arroyo. Here, as in other dry washes, water flows underground. Desert trees with their extensive tap roots are able to reach this source. Over time a small forest develops, creating habitat for many species of wildlife and birds.

Now open this flap and fold other side.

Birds ... and more relaxation ...
await you at beautiful local park settings.
Bring your birding binoculars!



Ajo District Chamber of Commerce
1 W Plaza St, Ajo, AZ 85321
520-387-7742
www.ajochamber.com

2014-01

Welcome to the Heart of the Sonoran Desert The Ajo Scenic Loop



On this 10.4 mile drive you will travel through an historic section of Ajo, then through a wonderland of saguaro, organ pipe, and other diverse cacti and Sonoran Desert vegetation. You may see a variety of desert wildlife, including some of the many bird species that inhabit this lush landscape.

Mileage from the plaza will be used to provide directions. Map and details are inside this folder - see the right side headed by START HERE.

*Savor your journey as you travel
through this magical desert!*

Please keep this flap folded in for the second half of your journey.

MILE 4.6 Ahead of you to the left is your first glimpse of the back side of the old Ajo Mine (New Cornelia Mine). It will be to your left for the remainder of the drive.

MILE 6.0 On the left are the remains of an historic Hia C'ed O'odham homestead. Although no one lives here permanently now, the family still uses this location for special occasions.

MILE 6.1 Intersection of Darby Well Road on the right. One hundred years ago this road was part of an extensive transportation network that ended at the international border.

MILE 6.3 To your right is the Cameron Ranch. This family was one of the original homesteaders in the area. Only the old water tank is now visible from the road.

MILE 7.9 Warning! You have now reached AZ State Hwy 85 and fast cars. Turn left to return to the Ajo Plaza. Turn right for a 30 mile drive to the Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument Visitor Center.

MILE 8.9 The rock pillar on the hill to the right marks the old Rowood town site. When Ajo was founded in 1916, it was only one of four small towns clustered around the mine. Rowood and Clarksdale were devastated by fire, then swallowed by the mining operations; Gibson became part of Ajo.

When you arrive at the plaza, you have completed your Scenic Loop journey. Thank you for visiting Ajo!

Alley Valley in Ajo, Arizona, September 2018, Photos by Iris Rodden





