



MEMORANDUM

Date: October 7, 2010

To: Chairman and Members
Pima County Bond Advisory Committee

From: C.H. Huckelberry *CH*
County Administrator

Re: **PR262 Altar Valley Watershed Restoration Project Proposal**

Background

The Parks and Recreation Subcommittee of the Bond Advisory Committee recommended \$3.5 million for PR262 Altar Valley Restoration Project. I previously did not recommend this project. Since the initial request for bond funding, the project proponents have successfully secured a number of grants to contribute toward the project and reduced the bond request to \$1.5 million. In addition, since the original request, the County has become a major landowner in the Altar Valley, having acquired several ranches and a farm for conservation purposes.

Technical Study Needed

The project involves two phases. The first phase would be the development of a comprehensive technical study of the watershed to develop restoration project recommendations. The second phase involves the implementation of those recommendations with on the ground projects. Our Regional Flood Control District developed a scope of work for the study and estimates the cost of the study at \$632,000, of which approximately \$132,000 could be done by District staff at no cost to the project. The project proponents and the Regional Flood Control District will aim to complete the study with non-bond funds so that all or the majority of the \$1.5 million in bond funds can be spent on actual improvements.

Recommendation

Restoration of the Altar Valley Watershed should reduce flooding and costly road repairs, increase groundwater recharge, and increase the productivity of the valley for both cattle grazing and wildlife. Based on the reduction in bond funding requested, successful leveraging of grants, a significant increase in County land ownership in the valley, and the

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scope of work produced by our Regional Flood Control District, I now recommend this \$1.5 million project.

CHH/dr

c: John and Pat King, Altar Valley Conservation Alliance
Mary Miller, Altar Valley Conservation Alliance
Tom Sheridan, The University of Arizona
Vicki France, Natural Resources Conservation District
Suzanne Shields, Director, Regional Flood Control District
Rafael Payan, Director, Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation
Kerry Baldwin, Natural Resources Superintendent, Parks and Recreation
Tom Helfrich, Water Resources Division Manager, Regional Flood Control District
Julia Fonseca, Pima County Environmental Planning Manager
Nicole Fyffe, Executive Assistant to the County Administrator

Department: Natural Resources Parks and Recreation and Regional Flood Control District
Date: October 15, 2010

2011 Bond Election Proposed Projects

Project Name: Altar Valley Watershed Restoration Project

Location: Altar Valley consists of a 776 square mile watershed located south of Three Points (Robles Junction), and extends almost to the U.S. Mexican border

Scope: The first phase of this project is to develop a comprehensive watershed restoration plan for the Altar Valley Watershed to identify economically viable, environmentally feasible, and socially acceptable watershed restoration alternatives. The second phase is to begin implementing the plan, which may involve structural, as well as non-structural, on the ground projects. These could include flood control and/or runoff retention structures of various scales and erosion protection measures along the main stem and tributaries of the wash complex, road modifications to direct water and minimize erosion, habitat plantings to restore native vegetation and invasive plant removal. It is estimated that development of the plan may cost \$632,000. Efforts will be made to complete the plan with non-bond funding so that all or the majority of the bond funding can be allocated to on the ground projects.

Benefits: The Altar Valley is an ecologically and culturally rich system and an anchor point of the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan. The County now owns several ranches and a farm within this watershed. Due to past land use practices, vegetation changes and climatic changes, the drainage systems of the valley and associated watershed have been degraded causing significant erosion, streambed cutting, and increased runoff events. This project will bring together diverse landowners and conservation partners to continue a complex ecological restoration of the drainage system from its headwaters. Benefits will include improved water retention on the land, improved groundwater levels, reduced erosion, reduction of catastrophic flood events, reduced impacts to County and State road systems, improved wildlife habitats, and increased health of the overall grassland systems.

Costs: \$1,982,000

Bond Funding: \$1.5 million

Other Funding: \$350,000 Altar Valley Conservation Alliance
\$132,000 in-kind from Regional Flood Control District

Fiscal Year Project Start and Finish Date: 2 years for plan development, 4 years for projects

Project Management Jurisdiction: Pima County

Future Operating and Maintenance Costs: The estimated annual O&M and monitoring costs for the project are estimated at \$15,000.

Regional Benefits: Reduced flooding, reduced annual road system maintenance and repairs, increased groundwater recharge, increased grazing productivity, and increased habitat conditions for wildlife.

Supervisor District of Project Location: District 3