



Marana Habitat Conservation Plan Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

What is a Habitat Conservation Plan?

A Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) is a planning tool that helps ensure that steps to preserve and protect vulnerable plants and animals are included in future land use decisions. An HCP allows communities or property owners to identify and protect essential habitat so that other, less sensitive areas can be developed. An HCP is part of the application for a permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) that allows certain impacts to protected species, while ensuring appropriate conservation of those species. The USFWS evaluates the HCP through an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to ensure the HCP effectively minimizes, or mitigates impacts to vulnerable species and their habitat.

Why is it important?

The Town of Marana is one of the fastest growing communities in Arizona and it includes a number of important natural areas such as the Santa Cruz River and Tortolita Fan, as well as the wildlife species found there that are threatened, endangered or are of concern. Marana recognizes that as the Town continues to grow, the quality of life of its citizens depends in part upon an environment that balances open space and growth. The Marana HCP is a document prepared with broad community and scientific input over the course of several years, to balance growth with the protection of important natural areas.

How does an HCP work for a community?

An HCP is prepared and submitted to the U.S. fish and Wildlife Service in support of an Incidental Take Permit to comply with the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The ESA permits private individuals and municipalities to incidentally “take” protected species if they commit to measures to avoid, minimize and mitigate the effects of anticipated take of species and habitat. The USFWS evaluates conservation measures proposed in the HCP to determine whether they are sufficient to offset any incidental take due to the Town’s capital improvement projects (CIPs) or other covered activities. Regional HCPs, like the Town of Marana’s, can significantly reduce the burden of ESA compliance by distributing the responsibility for endangered species conservation among the community, and bringing a broad range of landowner and Town activities under the HCP’s legal protection.

What species will be protected through the Marana HCP?

Two species covered in the HCP are currently protected by the Endangered Species Act, the lesser long-nosed bat and the southwestern willow flycatcher. Eleven other increasingly rare species that may become listed are also included: the northern Mexican garter snake, cactus ferruginous pygmy owl, Sonoran desert tortoise, yellow-billed cuckoo, pale Townsend’s big-eared bat, talus snail, ground snake, Tucson shovel-nosed snake, burrowing owl, Merriam’s mesquite mouse, and lowland leopard frog.

Marana HCP Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) - Continued

What projects are included in the Marana HCP?

Marana's HCP Preferred Alternative (Alternative C) includes Town capital improvement projects (such as road and bridge construction, new parks, public water infrastructure, airport improvements, etc.) and discretionary action projects such as requests for rezoning for development. Alternative C also includes a provision for residential, commercial, or industrial development proponents to voluntarily apply for a certificate of inclusion under the Town's HCP if they agree to follow HCP conservation measures. Voluntary inclusion will enable projects to move ahead more quickly, and will provide protection for landowners in the future event that other species covered by the HCP are listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA.

What are some of the conservation measures in the Marana HCP?

- Preservation and long-term management of natural, undisturbed open space
- Preservation of wildlife corridors to link habitat areas
- Field surveys for covered species
- Education activities and programs related to the HCP
- Burrowing owl management areas
- Conduct research activities that will contribute to the regional conservation of the Tucson shovel-nosed snake
- Management of invasive species
- Riparian restoration
- Ordinance revisions to protect habitat
- Implementation of Environmentally Sensitive Roadway Design Guidelines

How will we pay for the Conservation Measures?

Much of the cost of this HCP is currently absorbed through environmental compliance measures for individual capital improvement projects. Additional funding will be derived from a variety of sources including the General Fund, in-lieu fees, RTA wildlife crossing funds, plan review fees, development fees, grant applications, and other sources to be identified. Public input is invited regarding funding methods.

How can I become involved in this HCP process?

The draft HCP and supporting documents are available on the internet at:

<http://www.marana.com/hcp> or at: <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/HCPs.htm#marana>.

For more information, contact Jennifer Christelman or Janine Spencer at (520) 382-2600. You can also contact Scott Richardson at the USFWS Tucson Sub-office at (520) 670-6144 x 242.

Please submit written comments on or before May 1, 2009. Comments can be submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Tucson Sub-office, 201 N. Bonita Ave., Suite 141, Tucson, AZ 85745; Faxed to: (520) 670-6155; or Emailed to: scott_richardson@fws.gov.

All HCP meetings are open to the public. See the Marana website listed above for meeting information. There are also opportunities for citizen-scientist volunteers on projects such as tracking the lesser long-nosed bat use of hummingbird feeders in coordination with AZ Game and Fish Department and the USFWS.