

Transportation Planning and the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan INFOSHEET

Background

Conducting transportation projects in eastern Pima County within the environments of the Sonoran Desert requires special attention because rapid metropolitan growth in the last half of the twentieth century has resulted in considerable encroachment into fragile Sonoran habitats depleting the land base and threatening the biological diversity and archaeological heritage of the region.

As the Regional Transportation Authority, Pima Association of Governments (PAG) is committed to ensuring that new transportation projects take account of the regions' complex biological and cultural resources and that any transportation planning is carried out within the framework of federal NEPA and SAFETEA-LU regulations. Additional guidance concerning land use planning comes from Pima County's Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan (SDCP).

What is the SDCP?

In 1997 biological conservation and urban development needs clashed in Pima County when a federally endangered species listing conflicted with planned economic development. The conflict and subsequent fact-finding exercise lead to the creation of the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan by the Pima County Board of Supervisors, adopted in 2001. The biological goal of the SDCP is to ensure the long-term survival of the full spectrum of plants and animals indigenous to Pima County through maintaining or improving the habitat conditions and ecosystem functions necessary for their survival.

A New Approach

The SDCP was unique in its approach to land use planning as it departed from the traditional view of placing political considerations at the front of land use decision making. Instead it was structured to reflect the natural environment with large working landscape reserves, as opposed to smaller species specific "island refuges" of protection. Setting aside important ranch lands helped make up a landscape mosaic of protected areas that reflected the important biological and cultural heritage of the region.

What made the SDCP special is that it integrated natural and cultural resource protection with land use planning. The Plan covers an area of approximately 5.9 million acres of Sonoran desert in Pima County and recognizes the protection of biological and cultural resources in the region as factors in effective land use planning, not obstacles to it.

Implementation

The SDCP is being implemented on a continuous basis to guide future land use decisions in Pima County. It is already helping to direct where public money is spent in conserving open space and dictating how cultural and historic resources are protected. The Plan will live on and steer planning into the future, not simply be adopted and forgotten.

PAG Interest in the Plan

Under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) federal regulations require that the **social, economic, and environmental impacts** of any proposed transportation project need to be considered among other things.

What does this mean for you?

The SDCP is a plan for the desert, but it is also a plan for the people. Increasing protection for the natural places and cultural sites covered under it will ensure that we have a better environment to live in, that our cultural heritage is preserved and that our biodiversity is maintained. As the population Pima County grows, transportation and land use planning decisions will be made using the SDCP as a guide ensuring protection for special places.

Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan at a Glance

A science-based comprehensive planning effort
Adopted in 2001 by Pima County Board of Supervisors
Area covered 5.9 million acres in Pima County, Arizona
Includes;

- Protection of critical habitat and biological corridors
- Riparian restoration
- Protection of mountain parks
- Historical and cultural preservation
- Ranch conservation

Community oriented and voter supported (\$174.3 million bond program passed in 2004 for the acquisition of open space in support of the plan)

Recipient of numerous state, regional, national and international awards

Find Out More

The SDCP is designed to benefit the community and residents of Pima County and to save our best lands and most precious resources for future generations to enjoy. The Pima County Board of Supervisors invites you to join other Pima County citizens in support of what is really an initiative to define ourselves as a community – one that understands and respects both its potential and its limits.

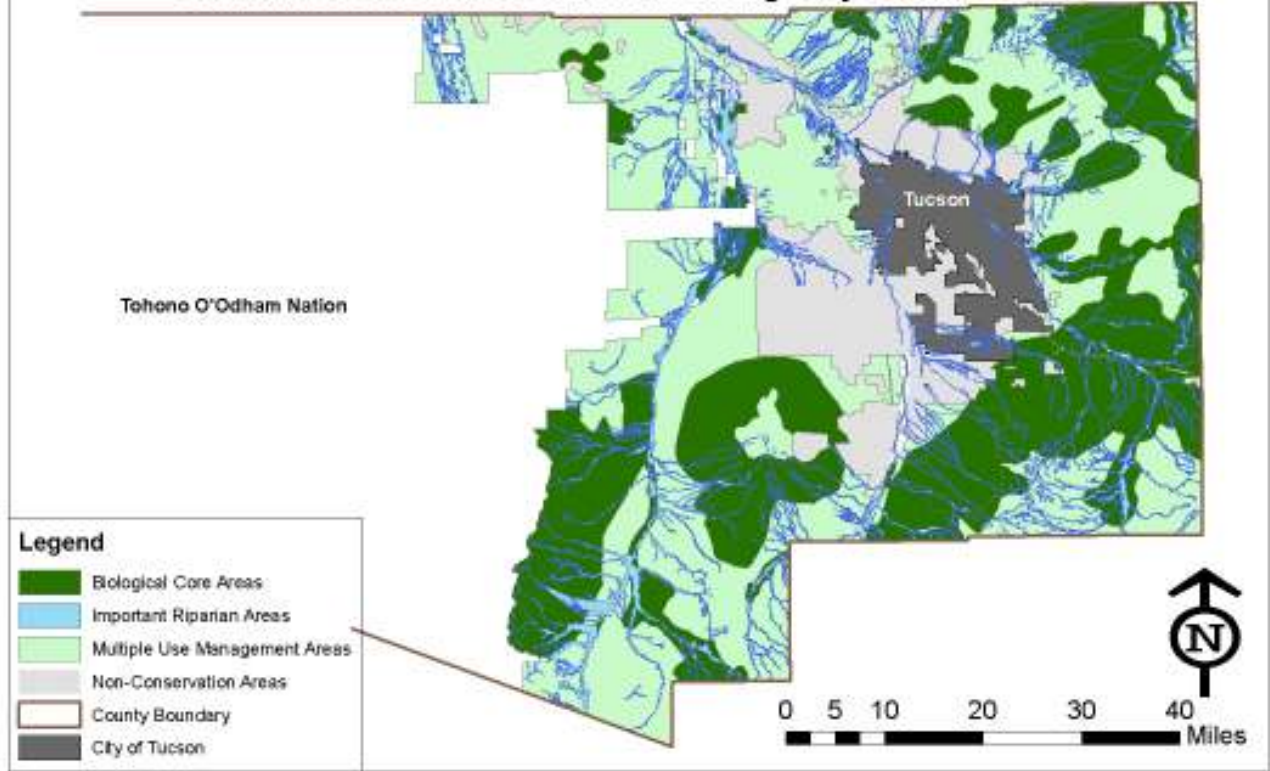
Visit the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan Website:

<http://www.pima.gov/sdcp/>

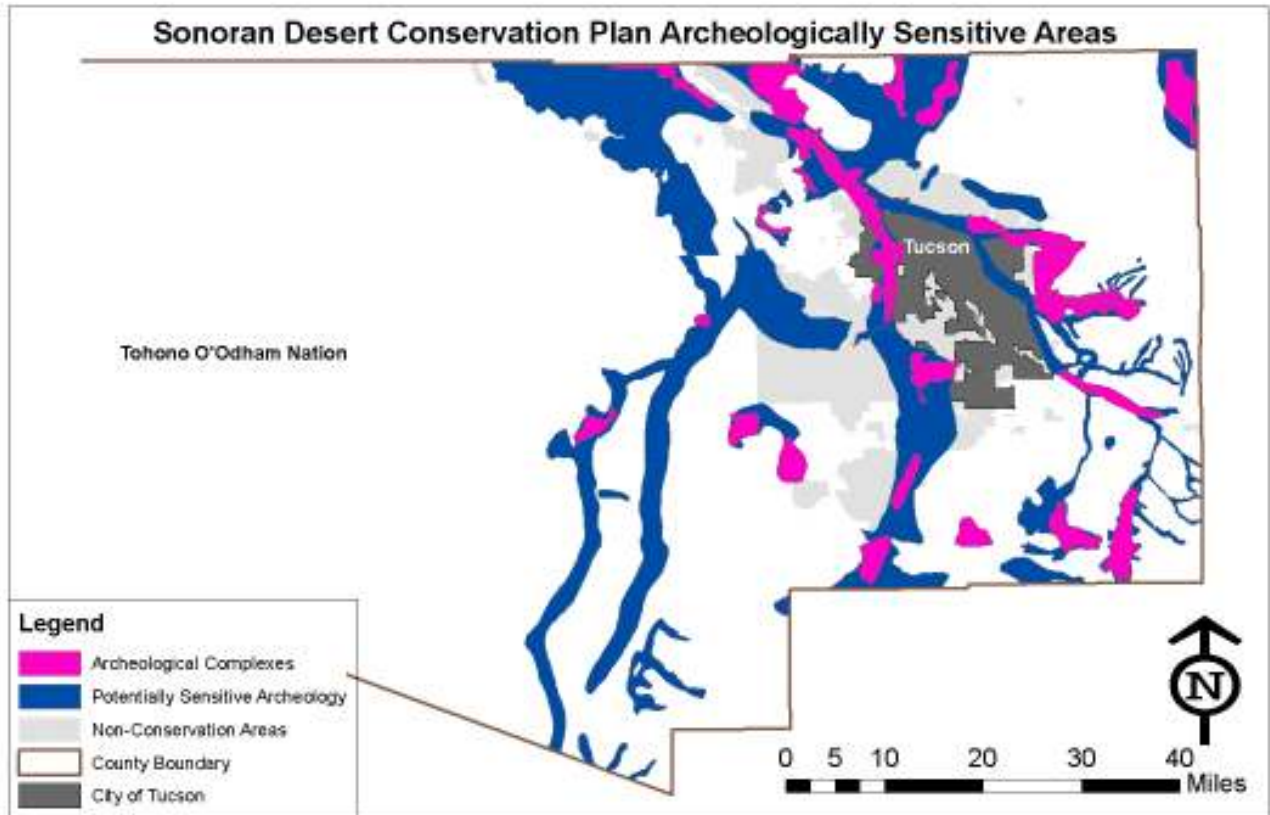
Visit the PAG website:

<http://www.pagnet.org/>

Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan Biologically Sensitive Areas



Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan Archeologically Sensitive Areas



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