

Arizona State Trust Lands Conservation Profile: Daisy Mountain



Sonoran Institute, in collaboration with conservation groups across Arizona and with funding from the Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust, has assembled state trust lands suitable for conservation into a single database. The resulting profiles focus on conservation values. Political values are left for another day.



Shaping the Future of the West

NATURAL CONNECTIONS

Daisy Mountain, with its surrounding high Sonoran desert, is a special place. Currently unprotected from development, it is under the management of the Arizona State Land Department. The mountain makes a recognizable landmark; well known to those who live in Northwest Phoenix, Anthem, Desert Hills, and New River. The iconic domed hill rises from the desert floor, and, including the area highlighted on the accompanying map, encompasses approximately six square miles.

The goal of those who cherish Daisy Mountain and the surrounding land is to have this area permanently protected under the Arizona Preserve Initiative program. Protection will provide current and future Arizonans with pristine views of the mountain and desert, enhance land values in the vicinity, retain essential wildlife corridors, create environmentally sensitive recreational opportunities, and preserve open space without air or light pollution. These lands are vital to maintain trail connectivity between Daisy Mountain and nearby destinations including the Maricopa County Regional Trail, Tonto National Forest, Sonoran Preserve, Phoenix Trails, Black Canyon Trail, and others.

Wildlife depends on the mountain with its inexorable link to the Tonto National Forest where many animals find food and shelter. Varied wildlife species include birds, javelina, deer, pack rats, desert tortoise, bobcats, skunks, snakes, and an occasional cougar.

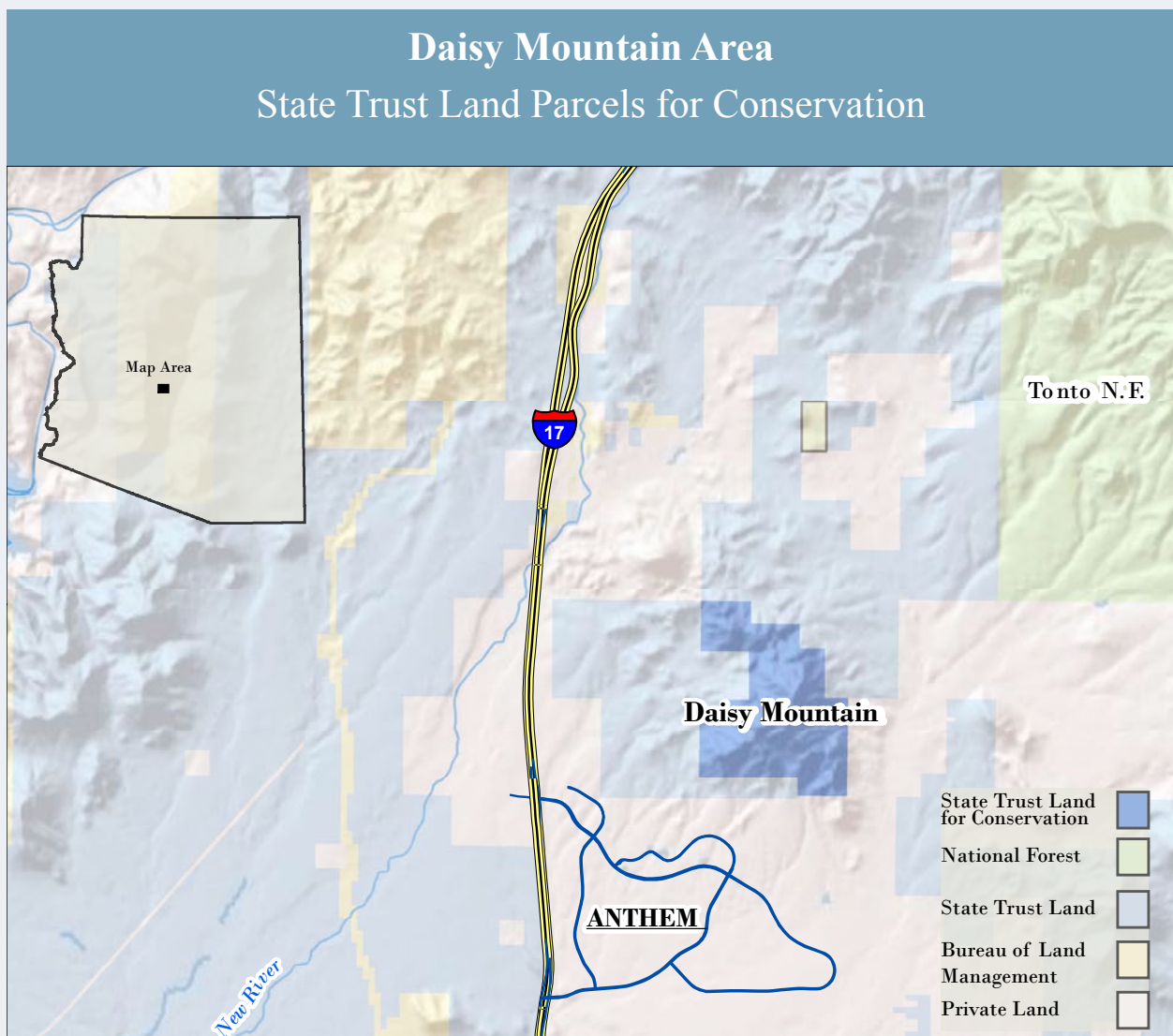


“Growing communities surrounding Daisy Mountain embrace and value the preservation of Daisy Mountain as an ecological asset important to Arizona. It is an area rich with geologic, indigenous, and historical sites that hold integrity and character equal to the South Mountain and Camelback areas. This valuable North Valley resource holds future benefits for Arizona’s park system.” - *Maria Grimmelmann, Daisy Mountain preservation volunteer*

LOCATION

Daisy Mountain

Northwest of Phoenix, visible from Interstate 17, and nestled near the master-planned community of Anthem, Daisy Mountain, with an elevation of approximately 3100 feet, features beloved desert terrain clustered near the top. The mountain sits amidst a range that is 1.4 to 2.0 billion years old. While it was never an active volcano, volcanic rocks have been found nearby providing evidence of activity close enough to leave their mark. The six square mile area is comprised of lush Upland Sonoran Desert habitat and is an important hiking and equestrian recreational site for the residents of Anthem, north-central Phoenix, and the rural communities of Desert Hills and New River.





REASON FOR CONSERVATION

Daisy Mountain

In 2004, North Country Conservancy (NCC) filed an Arizona Preserve Initiative (API) application for approximately 80 percent of the Daisy Mountain Area. NCC expanded the area of interest to include the wildlife/trail corridor to the Tonto National Forest and New River Community Park facilities with possible connections to the Table Mesa Recreation Area. The lands met the API criteria of being “within three miles of a municipality (Phoenix) equal to or greater than 10,000 persons” and having the purpose to protect “the natural assets of state trust land for the long-term benefit of the land, the beneficiaries, lessees, the public, and unique resources such as open space, scenic beauty, protected plants, wildlife, archaeology, and multiple use values.”

The management of these lands must include access for a variety of purposes that do not cause irreparable harm including non-motorized recreation, photography, historical and cultural studies, education opportunities, and environmental studies. Recreational activities provide business opportunities and employment for the surrounding communities as “companies ranked recreation/parks/open space as the highest priority in choosing a new location for their business.” (Economic Benefits of Open Space, Trust for Public Land, 1999)



ARIZONA STATE TRUST LAND

In 1912, the federal government gave 10.5 million acres of state trust lands to the new state of Arizona. These lands are not owned by the state, but are held in trust for the benefit of the state’s school system and several other beneficiaries.

Proceeds from the sale or lease of these lands generated about \$50 million for the beneficiaries in 2010. The Arizona State Land Department, in its role as trustee for the beneficiaries, is constitutionally obligated to seek maximum financial return for trust lands.

This requirement has complicated efforts to preserve state trust land for recreational use and environmental protection. The state cannot simply turn a parcel of trust land into a park or nature preserve since it is required to receive full market value for the land. All state trust land is subject to sale or lease to the highest bidder. Preservation of trust land requires sustained community input coupled with legislative action.



STATE TRUST LAND CONSERVATION

Collaborating Partners

The North Country Conservancy, which merged into Desert Foothills Land Trust in 2013, utilizes collaborative and inclusive approaches to protect Daisy Mountain Area lands. The Conservancy also works closely with conservation, education, and legislative groups to promote conservation of all state trust lands. Past Conservancy efforts with other community and governmental groups have helped obtain vital trails easements.

The Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust seeks to help people in need, especially women, children and families; to protect animals and nature; and to enrich community life in the metropolitan areas of Indianapolis and Phoenix.

The Sonoran Institute inspires and enables community decisions and public policies that respect the land and people of western North America. Facing rapid change, communities in the West value their natural and cultural resources, which support resilient environmental and economic systems. Founded in 1990, the Sonoran Institute helps communities conserve and restore those resources and manage growth and change through collaboration, civil dialogue, sound information, practical solutions and big-picture thinking. The Sonoran Institute is a nonprofit organization with offices in Tucson and Phoenix, Arizona; Bozeman, Montana; Glenwood Springs, Colorado; Sheridan, Wyoming; Twentynine Palms, California; and Mexicali, Baja California, Mexico.



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