



Arizona State Trust Lands Conservation Profile:

Dragoon Mountains Wildlife Corridor



VULNERABLE ECOSYSTEM

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

Located in the Coronado National Forest, wild and remote, the Dragoon Mountain Range lies northeast of the fabled town of Tombstone. The Range harbors some of the most threatened wildlife in southern Arizona. There has long been interest in this fragile ecosystem and conservation of state trust land on its southern and western boundaries would help protect wildlife that calls this territory home and preserve their well-established migratory paths. This area features diverse vegetation and wildlife; specifically fifteen species of threatened, endangered, or "special concern" animals and plants. Jaguars have been seen in Southern Arizona and according to Michael Robinson of the Center for Biological Diversity, "Jaguars are an integral part of the deserts of the Southwest where they have lived for many thousands of years. They are stunning animals that help maintain the health of their prey and habitat."

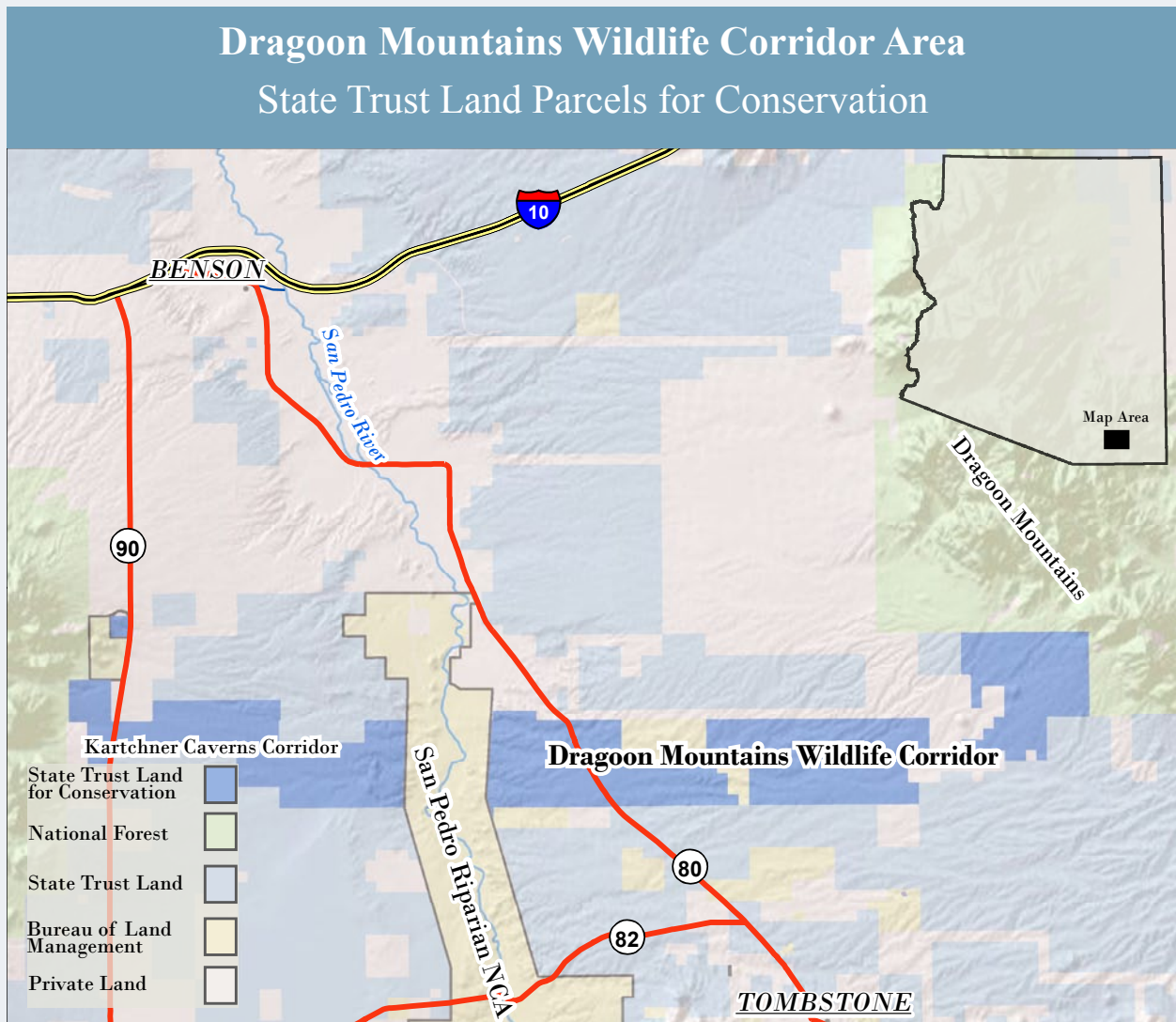
The 16,000 acres of state trust land proposed for conservation are deemed a critical linkage for wildlife that range between the Coronado National Forest and the San Pedro River. These state lands are currently leased for grazing to owners of adjacent private lands, but like all state trust land are eligible for sale to the highest bidder. Presently, two major residential developments are in progress on 19,700 acres adjacent to the area proposed for conservation.



LOCATION

Dragoon Mountains Wildlife Corridor

The Dragoons are approximately 60 miles southeast of Tucson and 35 miles northeast of Sierra Vista. Various parcels adjacent to the western and southern boundaries of the Range are privately owned or held in trust by the State and remain relatively remote. Until recently, there were only two houses along this edge of the Range: ranch headquarters for the Horse Ranch in west Stronghold Canyon, and the Three Sisters Ranch in Granite Springs Canyon. Residential and resort development are occurring on land along the western and southern edges, and additional development poses a threat to this important migratory corridor.



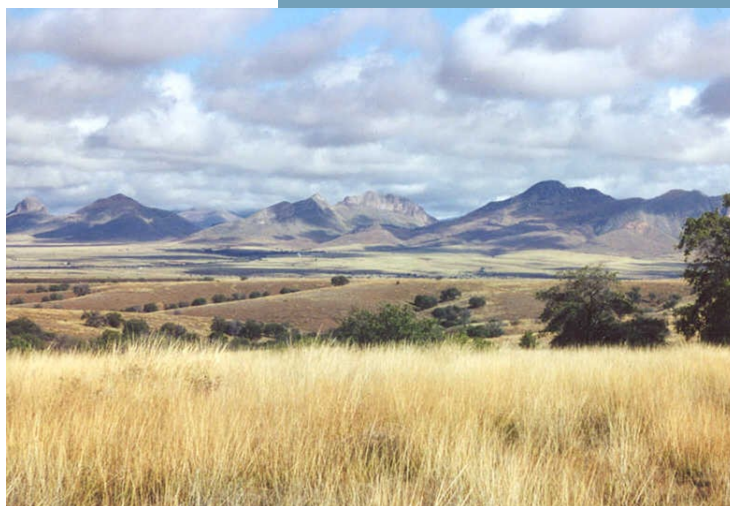


REASON FOR CONSERVATION

Dragoon Mountains Wildlife Corridor

The gently sloping grassland areas found along portions of the western flank of the Dragoons are some of the best examples of this habitat type in Coronado National Forest. This area continues to provide habitat for grassland-dependent species imperiled by loss of habitat elsewhere. Maintenance of an open savanna environment conveys an accurate sense of what the area was like during the mid to late 1800s, its most important historical and cultural era.

The addition of 16,000 acres adjacent to the Dragoon Ecosystem Management Area managed by the U.S. Forest Service would provide an additional buffer for the unique combination of flora and fauna that contribute to the biological diversity of the Coronado National Forest.



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 Arizona Wilderness Coalition strives to permanently protect and restore Wilderness and other wild lands and waters in Arizona for the enjoyment of all citizens and to ensure that Arizona's native plants and animals have a lasting home in wild nature.

Sky Island Alliance is a grassroots organization dedicated to the protection and restoration of the rich natural heritage of native species and habitats in the Sky Island region of the southwestern United States and northwestern Mexico.

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.



Building a Legacy of Community
Grantmaking since 1998



CONTACT:

Dave Richins, Director
Sun Corridor Legacy Program
11010 N. Tatum Blvd, Ste D101
Phoenix, AZ 85028
(602) 393-4310 x 309
drichins@sonoraninstitute.org



Shaping the Future of the West