



Arizona State Trust Lands Conservation Profile: McDowell Sonoran Preserve



WATCHABLE WILDLIFE AND MICROHABITATS

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

Long a source of pride, the McDowell Mountains stand as a majestic backdrop for the cities of Scottsdale and Fountain Hills. These beloved mountains are varied in their altitude and breadth, but these attributes provide a unique opportunity for vegetation to thrive and allow wildlife to flourish in the oftentimes sizzling and rainless summers.

There are two distinct state trust land parcels that have long been coveted by those interested in protecting the McDowells. Along the southern border of the park sits approximately 2,400 acres of mountainous terrain that provides a multitude of microhabitats on north and south slopes of deep, shaded canyons. Microhabitats are small spaces that have been created by a quirk of nature such as an outcropping that provides the perfect habitat for an opportunistic seedling to thrive. These special habitats help make the McDowell Mountain region some of the most richly diverse areas in the Southwest.

The northern most parcel of state trust land adjacent to the McDowells and proposed for conservation has been identified as a critical wildlife linkage due to its regional significance to the long term health and stability of wildlife populations according to the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AFGD).

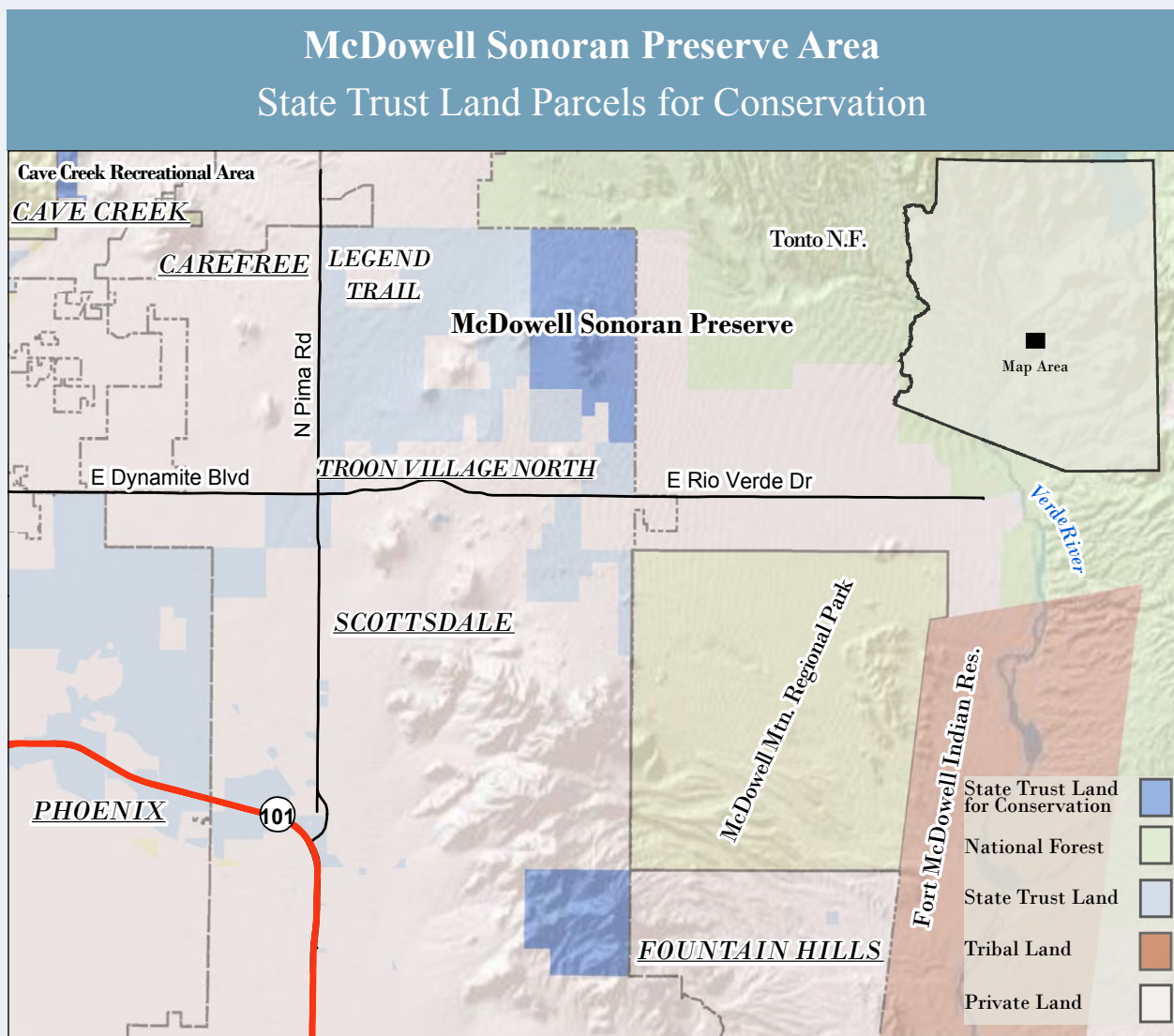
Both areas face urban edge pressures and deserve to be conserved.



LOCATION

McDowell Sonoran Preserve

The 6,600 acres of state trust land proposed for conservation are located within two noncontiguous parcels. One is located at the southwestern tip of the McDowell Mountain Regional Park in the heart of Scottsdale and nestled on the west side of Fountain Hills. The second parcel is bounded by the Tonto National Forest to the north, the master planned community of Legend Trails to the west, and Troon Village North to the south.





REASON FOR CONSERVATION

McDowell Sonoran Preserve

Clearly understood as an economic engine to the Scottsdale and Fountain Hills region, these mountains and surrounding lands provide an invaluable resource to both communities. Preservation of both state trust land parcels enhances the ability to draw dollars to the region and ensure that a valuable amenity is available to residents as well.

Arizonans' love of wildlife is an integral piece of the economic engine of the region. Providing space for both humans and wildlife is high on the list as a determining factor for ensuring that these parcels are conserved. Both areas provide habitat as well as a critical connection to the Tonto National Forest. Mountain lions, also known as cougars, have been documented in the area and by their very nature require a large range to survive. With the human population growing and cat habitats and landscape linkages shrinking there is unrelenting pressure on this important link in the ecosystem.

The 6,600 acres of state trust land proposed for conservation would provide a critical cushion for survival of this ecosystem that so many in the community cherish.



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 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.

“If Wildlife Watching were a company, its sales of \$38.4 billion would rank it 33rd in the Forbes 500 list for 2001—placing it just ahead of Motorola and Kmart.”

*- 2001 National and State Economics of Wildlife Watching,
US Fish and Wildlife Service*



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