

Arizona State Trust Lands Conservation Profile: Picacho Mountains and State Park

ART OF THE ANCIENTS

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

An imposing promontory comes slowly into view as one moves south along Interstate 10 approximately 35 miles northwest of Tucson. Just west of the freeway and jutting skyward, Picacho Peak is an unmistakable landmark for modern and ancient travelers. The Picacho range runs north to south, with Picacho Peak located on the southern end and the rest of the range rising from the valley floor further to the northeast. It is speculated that the ancients used this area as rest stop and guidepost just as we do today. The state trust land surrounding Picacho Peak and the entire mountain range is well known for its archeological artwork, also known as petroglyphs or glyphs.

There are over 4,000 recorded images throughout this area; stick man glyphs appear in abundance as well as deer and big horn sheep. Other mysterious drawings include suns, circles, four pointed stars, and squiggly lines with no distinctive repeating patterns. This form of communication is rife with opportunities for interpretation. For example one indecipherable squiggle when viewed from above remarkably resembles a nearby mountain perhaps suggesting that the glyph functioned as a map.

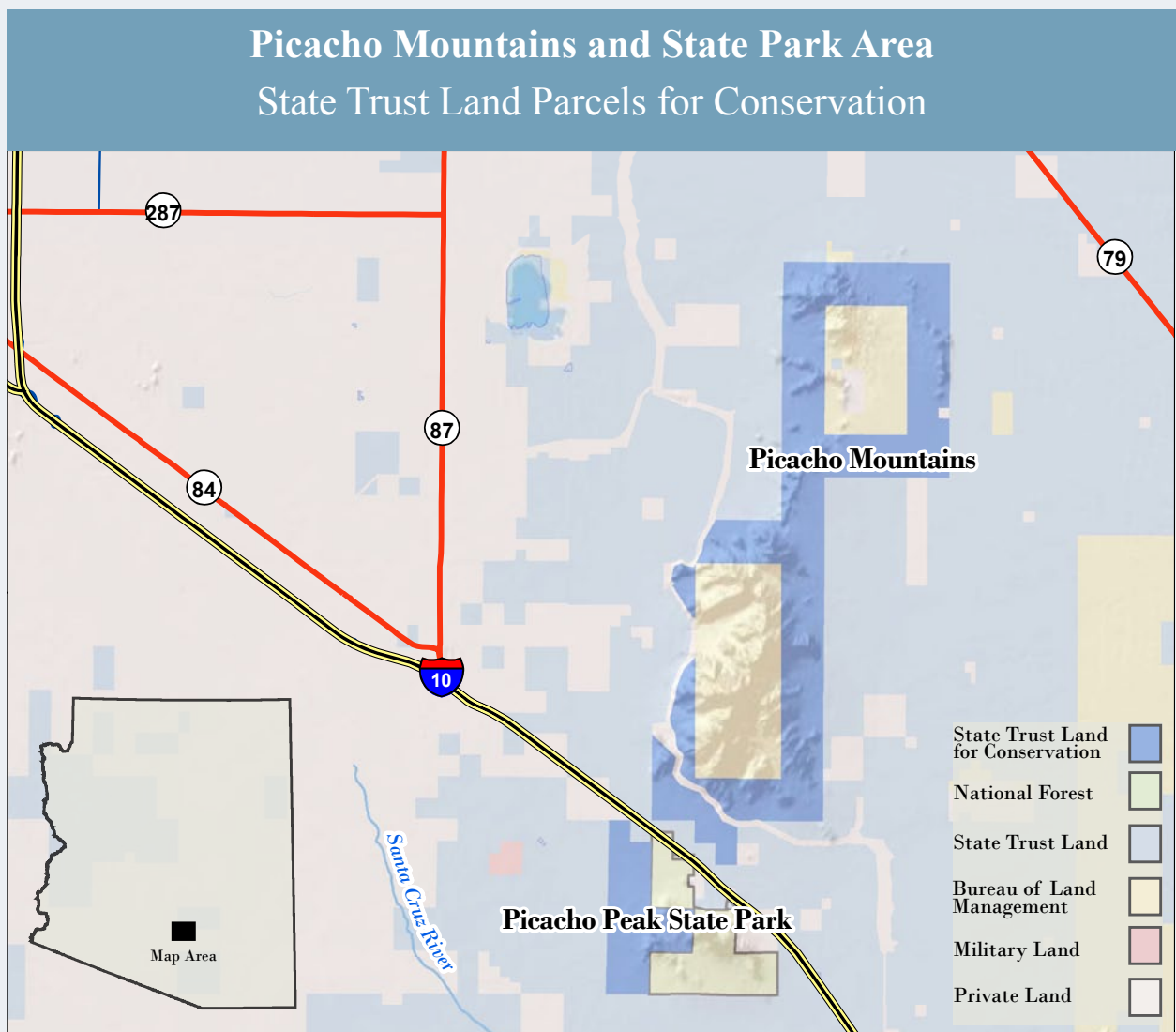
These mysterious drawings are a fascinating window to our past, but the state trust land that holds these amazing artifacts are threatened by the inevitable encroachment of urban development between Phoenix and Tucson, and hence conservation of these lands is proposed.



LOCATION

Picacho Mountain and State Park

The 21,600 acres of state trust land proposed for conservation is located on both sides of Interstate 10 approximately halfway between Phoenix and Tucson.





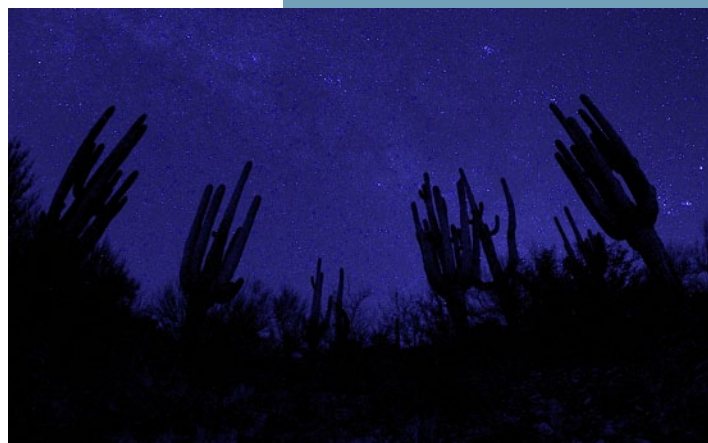
REASON FOR CONSERVATION

Picacho Mountains and State Park

Many of the over 4,000 recorded petroglyphs throughout this area are located in the 21,600 acres of state trust land that surround the Picacho Mountains; with the most spectacular located on the north end of the range.

The glyphs around Picacho Peak have been attributed to three different eras and peoples. It is believed that Native Americans from the period between 8000 B.C and 400 A.D were the area's first inhabitants and the glyphs attributed to them are still discernible. Hohokam images from the 12 and 13th century are the most abundant. Between the collapse of the Hohokam culture and the arrival of European settlers, the Pima Indians, or others, retraced the petroglyphs originally drawn by the Hohokam.

Reasons for conservation are numerous, but clearly understanding those who came before us can serve to guide our path. We learn from our ancestors and their efforts are worth conservation. One interesting glyph is described as a four pointed star or outlined cross. An intriguing interpretation is that these petroglyphs portray Venus, the morning star. Look for dark smooth rocks throughout this amazing area when you want to see awe inspiring ancient art!



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.



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