



Arizona State Trust Lands Fact Sheet: Santa Cruz Wildlife Corridor



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.

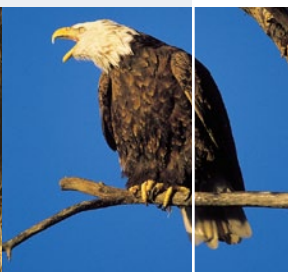


Shaping the Future of the West

PRECIOUS HABITAT

A southern Arizona success story and a lifeline for people and animals, the Santa Cruz River meanders its way back and forth between the United States and Mexico. It traverses landscapes ranging from wild ciénegas (marshes) to the urbanity of downtown Tucson. While the river has been revived in glorious fashion, it is still highly imperiled and the need for ongoing restoration motivates diverse interested parties to overcome their differences in order to protect and continue the restoration of the Santa Cruz. Now, many are looking further afield and realize that conservation of the lands that surround the river is just as important as conserving the river itself.

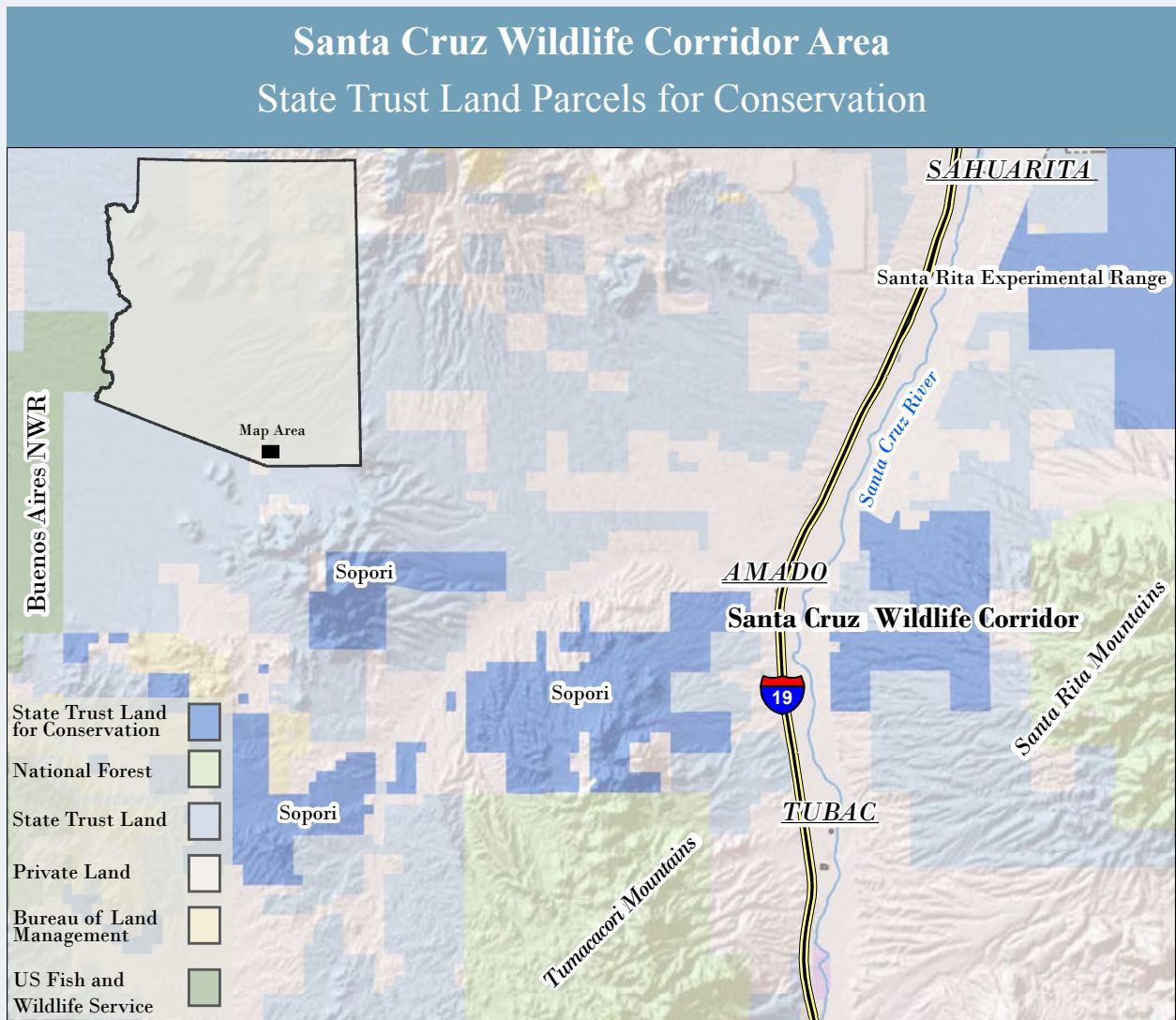
The state trust lands proposed for conservation are prime candidates for ecological preservation as they fall within a vital linkage area identified in Arizona's Wildlife Linkages Assessment. Connecting the Santa Rita Mountains with the Tumacácori Mountains, the parcels in the Wildlife Corridor comprise a vital gateway for a variety of migratory species including birds and bats, and the rarest of cats in North America - jaguars and ocelots, which have been spotted by people and remote cameras. While efforts are underway to monitor and protect habitat for these endangered cats, it has become imperative to conserve additional lands surrounding the River to ensure migratory corridors are preserved.



LOCATION

Santa Cruz Wildlife Corridor

The state trust lands proposed for conservation are located halfway between Sahuarita and Nogales, Arizona and near the towns of Amado and Tubac along the eastern side of Interstate 19. The 8,800 acres are a critical wildlife corridor between the Santa Rita Experimental Range state trust lands to the northeast, the actual Santa Rita Mountain range due east, the Santa Cruz River itself, the Tumacacóri Mountains to the southwest, and eventually the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge to the west.





REASON FOR CONSERVATION

Santa Cruz Wildlife Corridor

The ecological reasons for conservation are many. "This area supports some of the greatest diversity of mammal species in North America, including black bear, bobcat, coyote, and mountain lion. White-tailed deer, mule deer, and javelina are common, and pronghorn antelope were reintroduced ... in the 1950s", according to Northern Arizona University's, Arizona Heritage Waters Department.

Many threats to the Santa Cruz Wildlife Corridor exist as well. Water, the unifying element that draws the abundant and varied wildlife and maintains the verdant landscape is still imperiled. Groundwater pumping throughout the watershed continues to lower water tables, threatens surface flows, dries springs, and destroys native vegetation and habitat. Reduced water flows are alarming and threaten not only the ecosystem but people who live along the river and depend on it to recharge groundwater tables that supply drinking water in the region. Many groups have banded together to protect the Santa Cruz River. It is time to look regionally at our precious resources and ensure that wildlife corridors remain intact for Arizona's wildlife.



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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