



Arizona State Trust Lands Conservation Profile: Santa Rita Experimental Range



LIVING LABORATORY

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

Upon investigation of the information expanse of the Santa Rita Mountains one finds a rich and varied history, an archeologists dream, a plethora of special places and a unique live science experiment called the Santa Rita Experimental Range (SRER). The SRER was established to study range recovery from drought and overgrazing as well as sustainable grazing practices in 1903 and initially managed by the Forest Service. The University of Arizona took over those responsibilities in 1987 and has continued this critical program that provides a continuous chronology of research on the effects of climate, grazing and other land uses on our unique ecosystem.

Conservationists long for pristine, unencumbered open spaces, but the intersection of humans and habitat is inevitable and the SRER provides an excellent opportunity to study and understand this crucial interface. How does the land respond to climate change? Are there best practices to ensure long-range sustainable livestock grazing in the southwest? Providing space and a living laboratory to understand the influences of civilization on the land is one of the best forms of stewardship.

The 50,000 acres of state trust land proposed for conservation is this living laboratory under the superlative stewardship of the University of Arizona's College of Agriculture.



Site 001 Series: 1919 and 2009

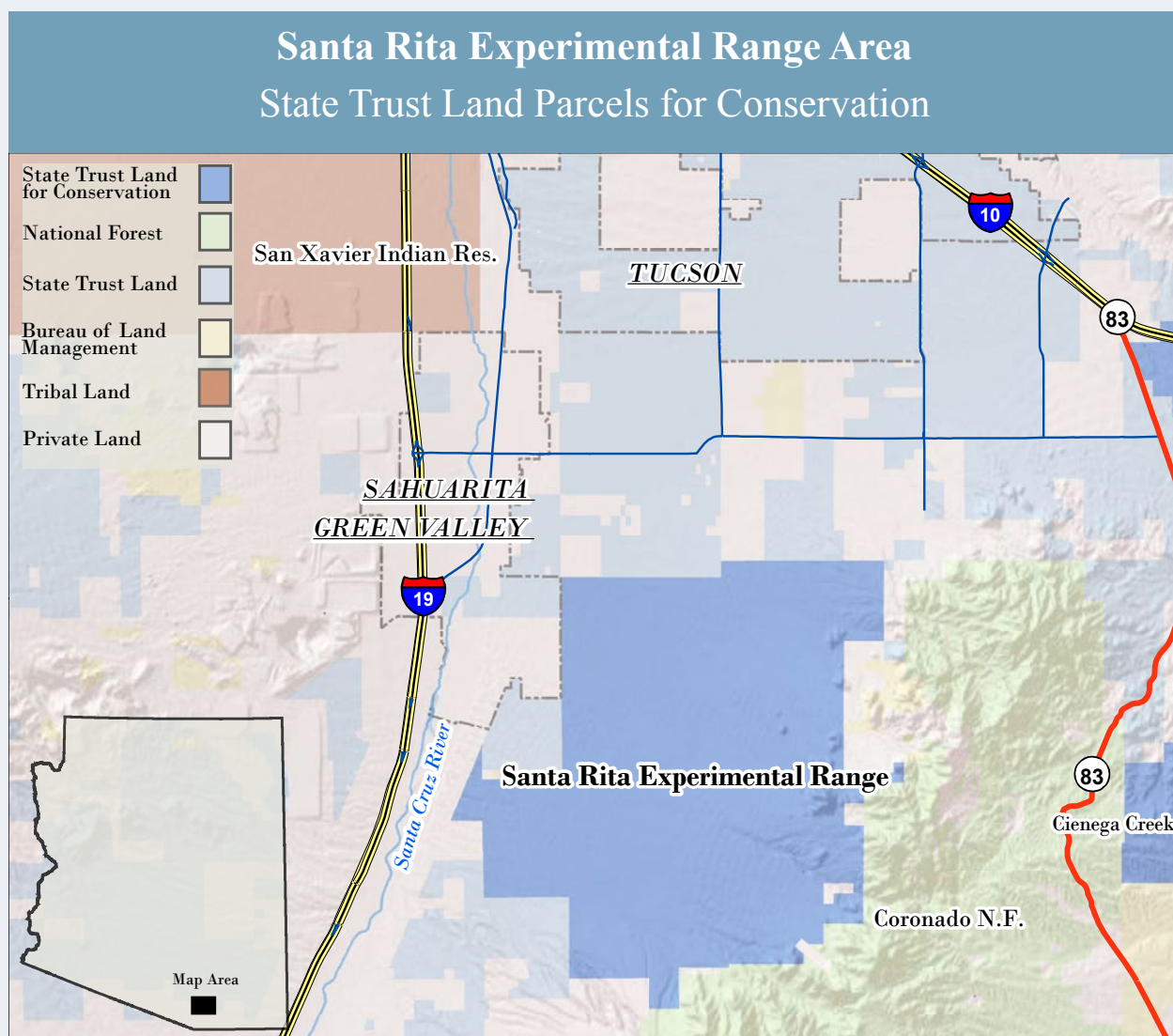


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LOCATION

Sanat Rita Experimental Range

The 50,000 acres of the Santa Rita Experimental Range proposed for conservation lie south of Tucson on Interstate 19, just east of Green Valley, and abuts the town of Sahuarita. It is considered an integral component of the National Environmental Observatory Network, created to observe effects of climate change.





REASON FOR CONSERVATION

Santa Rita Experimental Range

It is fitting that these 50,000 acres have been studied so closely for over 100 years. Soon the Santa Rita Experimental Range will be enclosed on three sides by a dense urban landscape and will certainly affect this valuable laboratory. Communities so close to SRER will create a different set of challenges and will require an increased commitment on the part of the Arizona State Land Department, the Arizona Game and Fish Department, the Arizona Department of Agriculture, and the University of Arizona to manage and monitor the health of the Range.

Tucsonans and others who live in southern Arizona have long cherished the Santa Rita Mountains for the area's ability to deliver a myriad of recreational opportunities. The SRER helps keep these opportunities available, by providing the space to understand climate change and explore ways to mitigate it. Moreover, the Range affords the chance to work with cattle growers to ensure the longevity of a heritage industry that is prized in Arizona.



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.



Site 97 Series: 1919, 1951, and 2009

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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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



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