



# Arizona State Trust Lands Conservation Profile: Maricopa County Urban Parks



## URBAN OASIS – PARK & PRESERVE GEMS IN MARICOPA COUNTY

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.

Well loved and heavily used, the parks, preserves, conservation and recreational areas in Maricopa County are urban oases in the Sonoran Desert. There are four areas in the northern region of metro Phoenix that deserve additional attention and conservation.

Located both north and south of the Carefree Highway; Cave Creek Recreational Area, Continental Mountain, Phoenix's Sonoran Preserve and Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area are actively used by hikers, equestrians, day trippers and hunters. Some of the areas even allow overnight camping, a unique but close-in experience that could disappear if state trust lands adjacent to these areas are not preserved. Dark skies, so important to a vibrant night sky, are enhanced by the protection from ambient light sources provided by these areas. Adding state trust lands to these urban parks would create additional open space for a rapidly growing region.

All of these locations are well used and loved for the ease of accessibility, yet the fact that they are suitable for everyone is both a blessing and a curse. They all face urban edge pressures and deserve to be conserved.



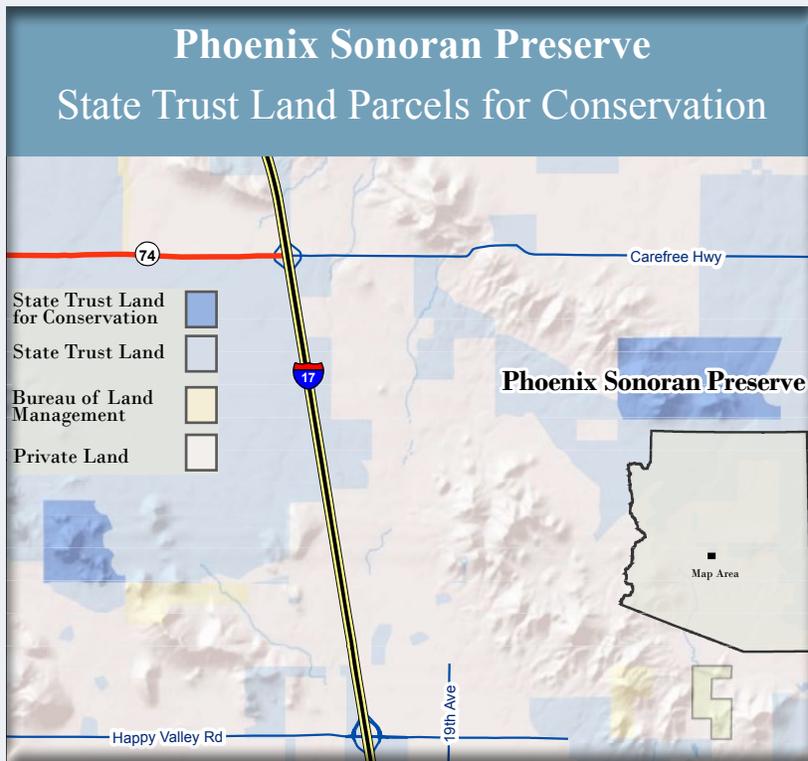
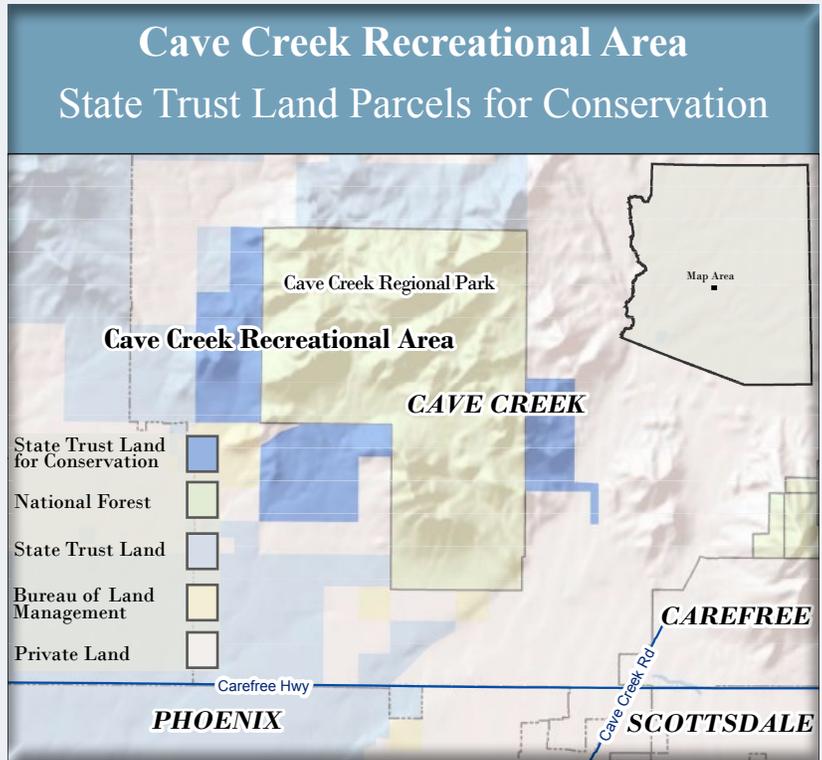
Shaping the Future of the West



# LOCATION

## Urban Parks

The 4,400 acres of state trust land proposed for conservation are located in noncontiguous parcels in the northeastern area of Maricopa County. The City of Phoenix's Sonoran Preserve is located east of I17 and south of Carefree Highway. Cave Creek Regional Park would benefit from state trust land conservation on three sides of the park. Continental Mountain and Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area are north of Cave Creek and provide a true close-in wilderness experience.



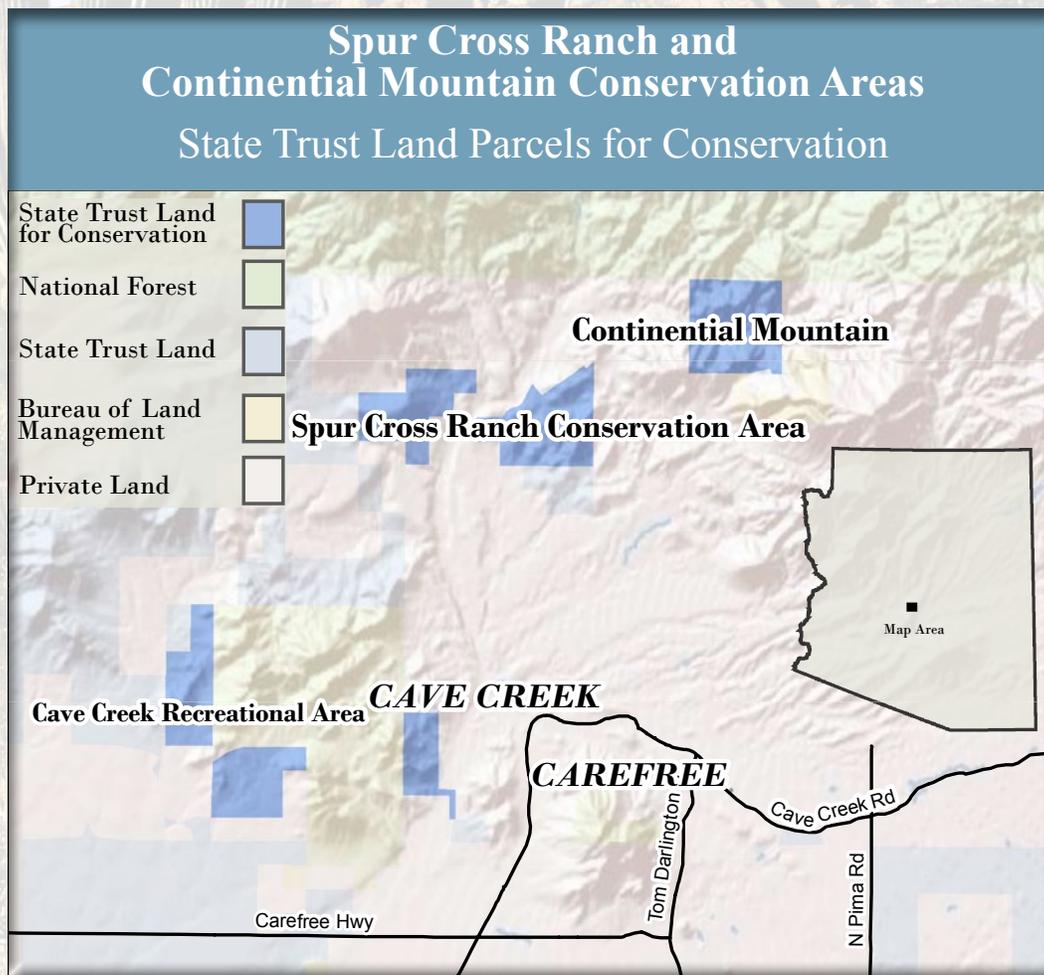
# REASON FOR CONSERVATION

## Urban Parks

These parks, preserves, conservation and recreational areas provide an easily accessible wilderness experience for residents and visitors alike. Many urban dwellers have little opportunity to really enjoy a night sky experience. These nearby parks offer the opportunity for special getaways that are often difficult for those constrained by time or funds. To experience the outdoors unfettered is an experience that cannot be duplicated.

Adding additional acreage to each urban park through critical preservation of adjacent state trust land parcels would ensure the parks' viability. These areas enhance the ability to drive ecotourism to the region and ensure that a valuable amenity is available to residents as well.

The 4,400 acres of state trust land proposed for conservation throughout northern Maricopa County would provide a critical cushion for survival of this ecosystem that so many 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



**NINA MASON PULLIAM**  
CHARITABLE TRUST

Building a Legacy of Community  
Grantmaking since 1998

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.

#### 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